



Reaper's Creek



BY ONISION

There Is More

Before you read this book I want you to understand something. All of my books, *Stones To Abbigail*, *This Is Why I Hate You* & now *Reaper's Creek*, they are not works of pure fiction, these are stories from my own life mixed in with my imagination.

Many of the things told in these stories reflect on who I really was, what actually happened & what was going on in my mind. *Stones to Abbigail* represented the better version of myself, many of the events in that book happened in real life as well. *This Is Why I Hate you* represented the darker version of myself, various aspects of that book were derived from my actual life too, but this book? This one is simply, myself, who I was both good and bad, during the time this story takes place.

As you read, I'll leave it up to you to decide what events really happened, and what is a product of creativity.



Welcome To The Creek

I was home... finally. My father had taken me so many places when I was in Ohio. He bought me so many things, but maybe that was just to make up for the missing child support payments. Everyone seems so worried about what their ex would do with their money as if they are a completely different person than who they originally fell in love with. What made you trust them in the first place? And why did your trust suddenly go away just because my mom left you?

I couldn't hear much of anything over the furnace blasting in my ears. The tiny window at the base of the bed my step dad built me allowed a subtle glow of light to peer in. I crawled over to the window to see my sister Joanna playing outside with our geese. She was happy to be home as well.

Summer this year was strange... there was a girl there, when I looked at her, it felt like she was staring right through me. She had curly brown hair, her parents were both from latin America. She was so cute. She was my favorite part of Church every Saturday, and the entire state of Ohio itself. At this point she is my main reason to return next summer, as I have no idea what to do with my father. Joanna just says "Ditto" whenever she talks to my dad on the phone after he says he loves her. I wonder if he has caught on to the fact that she says that because of the things my mom told her about her biological father, things I think might be true.

I climbed down my bed, hanging by chains over my water heater, washer & dryer. That's right, I live in a 8 x 6 box, it sits by the kitchen in my 900 square foot home. But it's paradise here. When I'm at my dad's house, I feel like I'm in some kind of cookie cutter Christian bubble cult. Everyone is smiles, everyone is doing

something... going somewhere. But how can they ignore how corrupt they are? I see past them showing off their pearly ivory teeth every time they see me. They are hiding from themselves, they are still breaking many of the fragile people they encounter, and smiling just the same.

Walking outside, my step dad is working on making another bed with his bare hands. Just like the bed he made me, the bed that somehow allowed me to exist with my own space in such an unlikely place. Where would I be going to bed without the contraption he made me? In the bathroom? Or maybe we'd just put hang a blanket from the ceiling in our little wooden front room.

"Hi Papa" I said as my step dad chipped away, he looked up with his goofy mustache bending to his smile. "Hey there Greg! I'm making this bed for your cousin Rod!" I smiled and replied "Oh, cool!" and thought about what he was getting out of it. My step dad had so much time on his hands... maybe he was putting food on the table, or maybe he was just trying to be everyone's friend. The problem with friends is they aren't bound to you by blood, there is no promise they will never go away. Sometimes I feel like my real friends are the woods that surround my house, the creek that runs by it... they don't leave me, they don't lie to me, they tell me who they are, and they never change.

"Hey dork!" belted my sister, who was no longer playing with the geese. "Oh hi Joanna, what are you doing?" I said with a smirk. She replied "None of your business loser!" This was typical, Joanna being irrational. Why did she say hi to me if she did not want to talk? Oh right, to call me a dork and move on.

I wanted to go up the trail to the swing alone, but I felt a familiar wet dew on my feet, of course, I wasn't wearing any socks or shoes yet. "Hey Daniel! Want to help me out ever here?" my step dad was trying to insert a section of the bed into a supporting pole, but the teeth of the headboard kept wobbling around making it a two man job.

My step dad was a tall man, maybe 6 foot 1 inches, he had a haircut like he was in the Beatles band, but the caterpillar above his lip threw the look off. I always admired how healthy he looked because most everyone else his age looked like they were well on their way to getting diabetes.

“What are you waiting for kid?” my step dad asked. I replied “Sorry Papa, I gotta go grab shoes, one second!” he replied with a dad-like frustrated, but friendly voice “Alright then.”

Slipping on some shoes inside, I ran back out and pushed the teeth of the headboard in the associated slots so he could firmly put the side of the headboard into the supporting beam. My step dad said “Thanks Buddy, I’ll let you know if I need more help. The base board should be no problem as it’s shorter though.” I laughed and hugged him. “I’m going up the hill Papa.” I said, he replied “Ok kid!”

Running up the hill I got hit by a lot of stickers. Those are plants that basically get stuck to your clothes by hooking them with their sharp prongs or by otherwise having a natural adhesive on them.

I didn’t really worry about the stickers at this point however, it was the nettles I was afraid of. Those push little needles in your skin, and cause pretty significant pain. Oddly enough, if you boil them, apparently they make a decent soup, but make no mistake, they are basically the jelly fish of plants.

Getting past all the stickers I was finally to it, the tree, the massive beautiful tree with a rope hanging down, just at the right length so you could swing on it, without smacking your body into any nearby trees.

Climbing up to the black and yellow twisted rope, I grabbed on and began to swing around. “Woohoo!” I screamed almost every time. I was so happy to finally be at the place I belonged, it didn’t matter I was wearing my pajamas still, it didn’t matter that I was wearing a T-shirt supporting a non-Christian TV show, I wasn’t at my biological Dad’s anymore. I was alone, in the woods, I was free.

Suddenly I saw the face of my bully show up in front of my eyes. It was Phillip, and immediately after, everything went black.

I felt a small amount of blood dripping down my stomach, my eyes were closed. Without opening my eyes, I rolled backwards onto my back. I opened my eyes and saw only trees above me, I was still outside, in the woods alone. The birds were chirping, the sun rays were peaking through the leaves and pine. The air was

so beautiful smelling & I could hear little insects crawling around me, minding their own business. Everything was right where it should be, except for me. What happened?

Looking down I could see the white T-shirt I was wearing now had a hole in it and a blood spot. I had fallen off the rope swing after I fainted. Why did I see Philip's face?

Walking down the hill and into the yard Joanna said with her basic brown teenager haircut and her clothes that were too tight for her plump body type "Oh my God dork, are you gonna die or something?" I replied "Yes Joanna, I'm going to die. Don't come to my funeral, you would somehow make it suck even more." Joanna yelled back a fake laugh as I walked into the house, she had nothing else to say.

Stepping across the wood floor my mom painted white as a result of our pets peeing on our former carpet till it was unbearable to have around, I walked into the bathroom, now putting pressure on my wound. I took off my shirt and threw it in the tiny trash bin. Looking into the bathroom mirror I gazed at my own face, same Daniel as always. Sharp jaw line, acne on my face, bushy eyebrows & abnormally tall for an 11 year old. My brown hair was so boring, I thought about dyeing it all the time, but my mom said I was too young.

Looking down I could see my wound, it was actually incredibly superficial. Maybe the sharp stick I had fallen on when I blacked out had hit a rib, I imagine if I was hit somewhere else, it would have at least dug deeper.

Time for my favorite part, pouring hydrogen peroxide on my wound and watching the science project explode in front of me.

I felt like I had enough outdoors for that day, it was time to retire to my bedroom and play video games the rest of the day. My game of choice, Metal Gear Solid, a game that had been unwittingly programming my world view, causing me to prematurely judge and reflect on aspects of our world I would have not considered till I was at least an adult without it.

Mom gets home at 5 o'clock.



The Cold Glass Smack

My mom was a little late getting home, traffic. She threw her keys on the table and hugged her husband, my step dad, Donny. “How are my kids” my mom asked. Papa replied “These little rascals? They’re alive.” My mom glared at Papa, clearly not satisfied with the bare minimum requirement that we not die on his watch.

My mom proceeded to telling us to fend for ourselves for dinner. With her matted down dyed red hair and basic makeup smeared after a long day’s work, she was off to take a shower and spend the rest of the day watching VHS movies on her 13 inch TV in her bedroom laying on the custom log bed Papa had made her.

Joanna walked into the front room and yelled through the door to my mom asking “Hey mom can I go to Uncle Matt’s house for the bon fire?” my mom screamed back “I don’t care!” so Joanna immediately smiled and ran off to get her jacket. “I wanna go!” I screamed after Joanna. Joanna replied “I don’t care, just stay away from me.” I smiled and ran to get my own coat as well.

Our neighborhood was a quiet place, we lived in the middle of nowhere, our neighbor’s houses were a good thousand feet from one another at the very least leaving us to easily mind our own business at all times. A creek ran through our small village, mostly family members were in the area which is why my mom clearly had no problem with us running over to a bon fire after the sun had already gone down.

To get to my uncle’s, we had to cross a bridge that was falling apart. It had boards with giant nails punched through them, the boards weren’t quite parallel or

consistent in width or length. The bridge hand rails and support system was made up of metal cables, tiny wires wrapped around one another, slowly rusting over time. To say the bridge was not appropriate for a child as young as myself, would be an understatement.

After crossing the slippery bridge in the dark, we could see the bon fire, people laughing, and clearly already mostly intoxicated. My mom trusted my family, but considering how much alcohol ran through our bloodline, I'm not sure why she would at this hour.

The night was mostly uneventful till one of my uncles offered me some whiskey. I was mostly opposed to drinking alcohol and drugs in general. But I was even more worried about drinking off the same bottle as my uncle. Strangely enough, I am more anti-germs than anti-drugs, and I am really anti-drugs.

"Come on Daniel, take a sip!" my uncle screamed. He was the oldest of all the kids in my mom's immediate family and lived across the creek from my Uncle Matt. My other family members around the fire got quiet as I replied to him "No." But my uncle did not like this answer and said "What are you? Some kinda wussy? Take some whiskey!" I again said "No, I don't want any." My aunt just to my right looked at me and said "Come on Daniel, it's just whiskey." I sat there silently, angry that an otherwise good night was turning into an awkward situation where my own blood was trying to infect me with a lifelong addiction. I saw what it did to them, and I didn't want that to be me.

My uncle hollered sitting opposite of me around the bon fire, "Here!" as he threw the bottle to me. I didn't even try to catch the bottle and it smacked against my knee. Immediately I jumped up and yelled "I said no! Why did you have to ruin my night!?" and before he could respond I stormed off toward the bridge to go home.

My sister Joanna was in my Uncle Matt's house, so she didn't see what happened. She didn't hear what they screamed after me as I walked away, and I was so upset, I didn't process what they said either. Full of rage my whole walk home seemed instantaneous despite the walk being about a quarter mile in distance.

The timely shower I took daily was spent in silence on that night, I just stood there, brewing, staring at the knee that had been impacted by the whiskey bottle. This would only further my frustration with people who drank alcohol. I would have understood if I was at least drinking age, but they didn't care, and my mom trusted them... why?

My head slammed against my pillow, right next to the blaring furnace that heated my entire tiny house. The burning gas-filled sound was a welcome relief from the disappointment I felt for my family that night. I knew if I was an adult and saw another adult trying to get a kid to drink alcohol, I'd throw them in the creek head first, but no one did anything. No one defended me.

My eyes closed, "How could this night get any worse?" I thought to myself not realizing the night was not over yet, my dreams owned my sleep and my soul. They were about to take me to a place I had never been before.

Something was very different. I felt a chill to my bones. I woke up in darkness, no longer in my bed, I was in the middle of a massive nothing. No sign of walls, no sign of a room of any kind. Just silence. I could hear a crackling noise, but it wasn't with my ears, it was like, a noise you remember, only this was playing in the back of my skull. I went to touch the back of my head when I was interrupted by another non-audible noise. It was a voice, but it was speaking a language I had never heard before. I looked up and saw a warped face. It was at this point I knew I was not in my world anymore, I was in a dream. Despite the warped face now being closer to my eyes than before, it remained hard to make out, like my eyes were sleepy causing an intense blur, only I could see their body clearly. Their long skinny legs, their stick-like arms, I could even somehow see their spine protruding outward and hunched forward despite me having no clear sight of their back. In dreams, I can hear things most can't hear, I can see things most can't see. I have no explanation cognitive abilities in a sleeping state.

This alien figure spoke what I can only remember as sharp aggressive whispers. I was paralyzed, unable to escape, a perfect victim for whatever the creature wanted to do to me. This is what a fly would feel like, trapped in a spider web, only I couldn't even struggle, I was paralyzed physically and mentally. The alien

graced the back of my neck with his twig-like fingers, he brushed both hands down the sides of my face and shortly after lined one finger up with the front of my throat. I began to feel a piercing sensation, but it was accompanied with the sensation that I was being choked as the alien pushed their finger into my neck. I could see from another perspective within the dream that they had submerged half of their finger under my flesh.

As if my soul was outside my body, I could see myself being impaled by this cold, gray creature. My eyes turned black as I began to choke up a mud & ash like paste out of my mouth.

“Good morning, good mo-or-or-ning, good morning to you! We’re happy, so happy, good morning to you hoo hoo!” my mom sang in the most irritating way to get me up every other morning. I looked over my bed rail and there she was, with my lunch packed, my backpack in her hand, clearly indicating I was going to be late for the bus.

Time to go to school.



He Had Black Eyes

The walk to the school bus was cold, the gravel covering the road up the hill to our stop creaked and crunched under my feet. I didn't understand why it was already so cold, but I just came from Ohio, a place I only knew for it's 90 to 100 degree summers and blazing humidity. Maybe I just lost touch with the place I was born. The cold breeze, the gray skies, the place I knew to be everything became a faint memory after being in Ohio for only a few months, yet it still felt like home.

My cousin Michelle was at the top of the hill waiting for the bus as well. Joanna remained silent as we walked up. "Hi Michelle" I said as our quarter mile walk came to an end. "Hi Greg & Joanna!" Michelle replied. Michelle had her bangs cut in a straight line, she had dirty blonde hair and freckles. She was always kind of a geeky looking kid, but because we were only a year apart in age, we hung out a lot.

"How long have you been waiting?" Joanna asked Michelle. "About 9 years it feels like." Michelle replied. The bus came around the corner moments later. I looked to Michelle and said "Guess we got lucky with our timing." she immediately replied "Shut u..." suddenly the bus exploded into thousands of pieces. Michelle was littered from head to toe with shrapnel and went flying over the side of the hill. Joanna was screaming in horror from her own wounds as Michelle jolted around spitting up blood and screaming "Vacation! Vacation now!"...

...I know, I should apologize, that didn't really happen. But I imagined stuff like that all the time. The bus pulled up and took us to school, just like I remembered the smell was the same, the stops were basically the same & the school itself looked the same. Oceanview Elementary, I'm not sure why it was called that considering

there was no ocean nearby, so I don't see how there could be a view of such a massive but distant mass of water. Some of the teachers were waiting for us as we climbed off the bus, maybe they just wanted to see what we all looked like, despite having no idea which of us were going to be appointed to each class.

The first day of school so far was what I expected, orientation. We met with a curly brown-haired lady, she was to be my teacher for every subject the entire year. I had the unfortunate realization that I was to be in the same class as Heather Simpson, a girl who had hit on me the entire year prior. She would follow me around the halls, out on the playground, everywhere there wasn't a "Boys Only" sign. Heather was built like an Amazonian child would be, only bulkier. She had blonde hair, blue eyes & despite how that sounds, was a pain to look at. Maybe it was her crooked teeth, or maybe it was her bad breath one could easily smell from many feet away.

After a lot of time-killing, our teacher finally released us for lunch, then recess. My favorite activity to take part in on the playground was the swings. I liked to swing as high as I could, then jump off. There was a ton of sawdust so I didn't really worry about falling on the ground. Today I wanted to get further than any of the other kids, so I swung back and forth as hard as I could, but I landed short of the boy next to me, so I tried again. But again, I landed short. Climbing back on I thought about what happened last night, how angry I was at my uncle, how none of my family was there for me, and I felt like I lost a sense of any limitations in my body. I swung forward, then back, repeated in a way I barely remember and quickly after, I was on the ground, touching the very edge of the border of the swing set area. In other words, I had swung so far, I nearly bashed my head on the pavement just outside the safe, sawdusted rectangle floor.

"Oh my GOD Daniel! That was insane! You were like a bird!" a voice came from the side of the playground. It was my friend David, this was the first time I had seen him since last year and I was immediately filled with joy. "David!" I screamed and ran over to him immediately going for a high five. David returned my excitement and lifted his hand for a mutual high five. I felt a wet splat on my skin and realized I missed a key moment before we slapped hands, he had licked

his hand as I lifted mine, because David is and always will be disgusting. He's my friend, but he's disgusting.

"Gross David!" I yelled and David replied not with words, but a laugh followed by a snort. David was wearing a yellow and maroon horizontal striped shirt. As usual, he was about two inches taller than me, had darker skin than me & had his dark hair cut like he didn't have a care in the world. "I saw your sister today Daniel, she's hot!" David belched, I replied "Can you never say anything like that to me ever again please?" David again snorted laughing, it was like the guy lived to trigger me.

As we tried to catch up, the bell rang for us to come back in, David went for another high five but I just ran away screaming "No David!"

As I walked into the classroom the teacher announced to us that she had already gone through all the material for the day. She concluded that we should move on to start one subject of our schooling early so we had more time for a butterfly project in the coming days. The subject we were to cover today was science, more specifically, dinosaurs. This is a day I would remember for probably the rest of my life, as I was about to see something I had already seen, something I never wanted to see, but had been forced to experience the sight of it again and again.

My teacher pushed in the VHS, and at first everything seemed normal, it was a generic film about the reptiles that lived on Earth long before humans, no big deal. But the narrator began talking about a concept that had no real scientific value that I could think of, he asked the question "What if a human was combined with a dinosaur?" Hearing this, I immediately scoffed. My condescending reaction was muffled quickly by the image they showed after. It was the alien. They called it a dinosaur-human DNA splice, but it was in fact almost identical to what I dreamt of before. The face that haunted my imagination, was realized in the physical world. This was the first time I had seen anything like it with my own eyes.

Immediately I stood up and left the classroom. The teacher didn't remember my name yet so she yelled after me "Um... student!?" I ignored her and walked toward the principal's office. I was lost in horror & thoughts of how the rest of the class reacted, it was like none of them had seen him before... the alien. Why was I

the only one who seemed upset? Why would they show that to such young kids? Why did they show that to me?

As I walked into the principals office, the plump short secretary wearing a tacky flower dress immediately asked me why I was there. Rarely do kids wind up in the principals office area on the first day. I replied “I need to call my mom.” and I did. To my disappointment, but not my surprise, my mom was away at one of her many jobs. I asked the secretary with tears beginning to fall down my cheeks “Can I stay here till it’s time to go home?” The secretary saw I was struggling and incredibly uncomfortable so she called the principal out of her office. “What’s your name?” said the principal as she slowed in her approach toward me. “I’m Daniel, I just want to wait here till the bus comes, then I want to go home.” The principal tried to get me to explain what was wrong, but I didn’t want to talk about it. They called over to the class and had a student bring me my belongings from the room I abandoned. There I waited till the buses were ready to take me home.

I didn’t talk to my sister or my cousin the entire walk down the hill. As soon as I got through my bedroom door, I closed it and planted my face in my cheap foam pillow. I was going to wait till my mom got home to say anything. My mom was my safety, the only person I thought could protect me, I relied on her for everything & knew if I had anyone I could talk to about it, she was it.

That night for dinner we were having lentils and toast. My mom had put food on the crock pot to cook all day while she was at work. This was common for us as we didn’t have a lot of money & food like this was inexpensive. “How was school kids?” my mom asked all three of us. Christina, my eldest sister, remained silent while Joanna began her usual rant about anything and everything involving her outfits, her hair, her friends appearances by comparison to her own or anything else involving her reflection. After Joanna was done talking about the most superficial of topics, my mom turned to me and asked how I was, I replied “The teacher showed me a picture of an alien on a video and I cried.” my mom’s face went from curious to angry in seconds. She replied “They showed you a scary alien? At your age?” I replied “It had dark black eyes, scales, it had no nose, but it had tiny holes where its nose would be and they said it was a dinosaur human, but it looked like an alien.” My sister Joanna laughed and said “Wow! Sounds awesome.” I

frowned and looked at my food hopelessly. My sister regularly seemed like a sociopath to me. I'd never understand why she thought my sadness was a laughing matter. My mom spoke again "Well, I'll have a talk with your teacher." Not even having the emotional strength to nod, I just sat silently looking at my food till it was clear that everyone was done with dinner.

After I put my head on my pillow for a final time that day, my fears became realized... the creature I dreamt of before had more strength than ever. He was here now, waiting, in the black.



Hole In The Wall

It had been four months since I saw the distorted alien's face screaming out to me through the VHS in my class. We had already completed the butterfly project and were consuming our time with basic math, spelling & for some reason playing the Oregon Trail on our Macintosh computers.

David and I had been hanging out most every recess since the beginning of school. Out on the playground David asked me one day "Hey, can I take the bus home with you?" I replied "Yeah!" with a little shake in my voice as I was not sure if my mom would approve.

As we arrived home my mom was not there, she was at work, as usual. David would giggle at everything my sister said walking down the long gravel road to my house. It was obvious he was basically into every other girl he came in contact with. Michelle would just look at her shoes and kick rocks, she didn't really have much to say to us normally, she was always somewhat of an introvert.

Once we got home David looked at my bed above the washer and dryer and laughed "Oh my god! That's awesome! I have to share my bunk bed with my brother, you just have to share yours with the whole families dirty clothes! Ha-haha!" I looked at him sarcastically, not sure if he was seriously complimenting my situation or not.

Just then we heard a car pull up outside. Shortly after we heard a girl laughing and hollering "Bye mom!" David & I looked at each other, David had a huge grin on his face, it was as if "Girls I love girls, give me girls" was written ear to ear on the kid.

Joanna went to open the door and said “Hi Mara!” David and I stared waiting for this Mara to show her face as the door frame was blocking our view of her. David giggled again as she walked through the door, it was just some random girl with the biggest breasts I had ever seen. I didn’t find her attractive but David could be heard loudly gulping so I can only imagine that was his type of thing.

The Mara girl was wearing a neon shirt, blue jeans, had curly brown hair & freckles. She probably isn’t what you are imagining as she came off as more of a band geek than anything else. David stared in awe at the girl’s breasts till I punched him in the shoulder. He giggled and said “What? Sorry! Haha!” and I pulled him back in my tiny room to play video games with me.

When my mom got home she was surprised to see Joanna and I both had friends over. Joanna shared her bedroom with Christina and I shared my bedroom with a washer & dryer, so there was no room for anyone to really sleep in a community fashion in either of our rooms. Despite this reality, over dinner we still suggested that my mom let both of them spend the night. My mom agreed and we most all wound up on the front room floor in sleeping bags together. Mara was the only one who slept on the couch.

David could not stop obsessing over Mara and her giant breasts, but fortunately, he was also a moron. After everyone turned out the lights David began loudly building a plot to somehow get Mara and his lips to connect. David said “Hey, dare me to kiss Mara?” to me and I replied “David, no.” he said again more loudly “I’m going to go over there, and kiss Mara on the lips.” I replied “David, you need to stop being a pervert.” yet he did not listen. Giggling he said “I want to kiss her on the lips, I’m going to do it.” Mara then loudly said “Um, excuse me?” I immediately replied “David you idiot.”

The room remained silent for the rest of the night.

The next morning we all ate cereal and went right on back to school. David wore the same clothes as the day before, but he was used to it. Mara had brought clothes from home, hence why her mom had dropped her off. At recess that day Phillip, the school bully, was waiting for me on the playground. He had given me grief throughout the year, but none so great that it was a huge problem. He had

curly blonde hair, completely random teeth as if God himself had thrown his teeth into his mouth like dice, shrugged, then walked away leaving them where they fell & as far as Phillip's height, he was about an inch shorter than me.

“Hey ugly!” screamed Phillip in my direction, I ignored him. “You know I’m gonna beat you down one day?” he asked, obviously struggling with however his dad or mom treated him at home. I continued to ignore him. I had no interest in making my childhood more screwed up than it needed to be.

Off in the distance, just past Phillip I saw a girl, one I had encountered a few times before, but she stood out today more than normal. My mom always taught me to be strong, to say what I feel & to stick up for myself... this came into play with approaching people I was interested in as well.

Walking past Phillip as if he did not exist, I approached the girl and said “Hi, I’m Daniel.” The girl turned to me and replied “I’m Aubrey” She was very short, had perfectly straight hair and bangs cut somewhat like the, go figure, Beatles again. The dark brown haired, pale faced Aubrey, was spending time on the playground with her friend Amber. Amber was blonde haired, and super skinny. I thought both of them looked so friendly & nice that I wanted to hang out with them more, but the bell had rung and it was time to go in.

On my way in I hadn’t noticed that Phillip was red-faced and enraged I had ignored him this entire time. But he was a bully, I had no concern with being a social hero for a bully.

Phillip had the same class as me now as he had repeat problems with students in his former class. Phillip was clearly upset that day, more than usual. As the day progressed he kept interrupting the teacher, and when the teacher finally confronted him about his rudeness, he told her to go F her self... only he didn’t just say “F”. He continued to scream at the teacher throwing a childish tantrum till the teacher decided to call the main office for help.

It was incredibly awkward seeing the principal herself with an assistant come to the class and drag Phillip out of the room, kicking and screaming. The rest of the class just felt tense and numb after he had left.

I could see a small boy in the corner of the room, he was clearly shaking the entire time Phillip was screaming & cussing at the teacher. I wondered why, I wondered what was going on in this little dirty blonde kid's head.

After I got home, the entire night felt different than usual. Seeing someone's life come apart like that, kinda reminded me how good my own life was. I wasn't happy to see Phillip dragged out of class, nor the dirty blonde kid shaking in horror as Phillip yelled, but during that whole time I felt confident, my emotions were hardy. I wasn't afraid of Phillip, I just felt sorry for him.

Sitting alone in my room, I was lost in thought. My imagination consumed my senses. I could see Philip crying, alone in a room. Screaming at his father on the other side of a door Phillip was locked behind. My imagination seemed more like a ghost, haunting Phillip's house. From the top corner of the room, I saw it all, his mother high on drugs, sitting in the front room with only static playing on the television. The dad flexing his fist yelling back at Phillip through the door. And Phillip kicking the door, punching the wall, doing whatever he could to make the room he was locked in look how he felt on the inside.

This was all just imagination though... I hope his life is much better than these fleeting thoughts.

Off to my dreams again.



Face Down Children

Sitting at the breakfast table in shock. Why am I doing this now? What could have possibly happened? Another nightmare. I wasn't visited by the stick fingered creature, I wasn't dropped into a world that threatened me.

I looked outside my window, the river running by. I stared, completely losing myself to the effortless flow of water that would take countless men to move so quickly and smoothly without machinery. Maybe this observation is pointless, or maybe we all regularly fail to embrace the true nature of nature. The reality of our reality. We're all impossibly fragile, ready to be taken at any moment, just like they were taken in the... "Morning brat!" my sister belted, interrupting my thoughts.

"Hi Joanna! How are you?" I said back sarcastically. "I'm fine, thanks dweeb." she replied with skepticism. "I hope you have a lovely day!" I yelped using an even more sarcastic tone, she replied "Why are you being nice? Did you..." The door slammed, I was already on my way to school and didn't have the energy to teach my sister about how to pick up on obvious social cues.

Phillip was right back in class that day. He wasn't suspended, he didn't even get detention. I was surprised because, simply put, I had never in my life seen someone cause so much trouble without getting punished. I think they were leaving him alone because they had already suspended him and made no progress with his behavior. Moving classes clearly did not help either. Maybe at some point people just accept that there is no fixing someone, so they tolerate them till they have a real excuse to be done with them for good.

I didn't want to go out to recess that day, being around Phillip on the playground, especially considering his parents had to pick him directly up from the office the day prior, I only imagined how they responded when they were at home, away from teachers who were more ready to call CPS on parents than call their own families just to check up and say hi. We want to be heroes, and we want to see others fail to make ourselves feel better. But I had nothing but pity for Phillip, he's a kid like me, his parents, even his DNA, the results of something less reliable than a coin toss or a roll of dice.

I heard a whimpering in the back of the room. It seemed while I was lost in thought a boy had slipped through the door. I asked "What's the matter?" the boy responded "The kids outside want to beat me up, they're looking for me." I replied "Why are they wanting to beat you up?" Immediately my hero complex was gaining momentum. The boy sniffed for a few seconds and said "They think I'm weak, I'm smaller than them, and they just want to be mad at someone." I looked at him silently, I felt lucky I wasn't below average in height, in fact I was above. My mom also taught me how to fight, so I wouldn't be in this guy's position, but it is as I said, roll of the dice, he couldn't control him winding up in this situation, but I can.

"Come on" I said to the boy. He looked up confused. I lifted the baseball I got from the recess bin that I now had in my hand and asked "Do you think those guys can play catch?" He looked back at me almost excited by the idea of having the upper hand. "What's your name?" I asked, the boy had glasses, slicked back hair & was a little heavy set, he clearly could stick up for himself if he wanted to, but even the smallest people can take on the biggest if they have the right fight in them, and this kid had near none. "My name is Aaron." he said. I grabbed his shirt saying "Let's go" and dragged him out the door. I headed to the massive field just outside class to confront the now growing crowd of children taunting the air with degrading references to my new friend Aaron.

I approached the group, thinking Aaron was by my side. "Do you have a problem with Aaron!?" I screamed. The group turned toward me. Phillip stepped out front and said "Yeah! Did you see that punk?" I realized the hard way Aaron had hid behind the fenced electrical boxes just as we left the class. Shaking my disap-

pointment off I replied “Yes, and I’m here to let you know that I’m going to kick your teeth in if you mess with him anymore!” Just then I heard I scream of “Yeah!” behind the electrical box. Phillip perked up and screamed “He’s over there!” pointing in Aaron’s direction. I screamed even louder while lifting up my hand cocked and ready to throw the baseball “Make a move! Go ahead! Take one step toward Aaron!” None of these people knew what a terrible throw I was. There was about a one in three chance I would actually be able to hit one of them if I tried, but our human sense of survival regularly demands most of us live in a fashion consumed by fear, regardless of the odds.

Not even three seconds of silence passed before the bell rang. Immediately everyone began walking in the classroom while Phillip remained. Phillip didn’t care he would get in trouble for ignoring the bell, his eyes were locked on me and I could see he wanted to hurt me.

I dropped the baseball to my side and began walking in. I expected Phillip to yell something threatening or offensive after me, but he was silent. I didn’t want to look back as I walked into class, I felt a heat on the back of my head as if his eyes were burning into my hair.

In class Phillip was completely quiet for the whole second half of the day. I had never seen him like this before. Maybe I made a difference, maybe the bullying would end, or maybe I was being completely gullible and worse things were in store.

David was on the bus waiting for me before we headed home, which was strange because his stop wasn’t on my bus route. I sat down next to him and asked “So?” and he replied “I invited myself over, I hope that’s ok.” I replied “Are you spending the night again? He replied saying he was just coming to my house because no one was home at his house. Someone would pick him up later in the day.

At home we did the typical boy things, he would hit on my sister, I would dry heave & we would play video games. After we got bored with games I saw my bow and arrow set sitting in the corner of my room. “Hey David, want to go shoot stuff?” I asked, his face lit up and so we began scanning the outdoors for things to shoot. “How about that bird in that tree?” he asked with a grin. I replied “I don’t

want to shoot living stuff, that's psycho. David giggled and said "Whatever" I walked off, down a little hill to the creek by our house. There were random dead fish that had swam up stream to lay their eggs, then, die. I'm not sure why some fish work this way, but they do. By the time their babies are born, their parents are already long dead. Almost like their bodies were symbols, like grave stones, only marking a birth to soon happen, not just a death.

Immediately I began plunging arrows into random dead fish in the creek. David screamed with laughter as he came down the hill to see what I was doing. "Oh my god! Shoot more!" he hollered as he snorted.

I had gotten about 7 arrows in the fish before I saw David's mom's SUV driving over our tiny creek bridge. I could see she was rightfully startled at the sight of arrows sticking straight up out of the large dead fish.

David ran up the hill screaming "Mom! Did you see that! Ha ha ha!" as his mom came to a stop in our drive way. I was now alone by the water with a smile on my face. David ran back to me to say goodbye "Hey Daniel see..." I turned to David to see nothing but horror in his eyes.

The fish were not alone.



Bodies In The Creek

The body was old. There was a mold growing on the side of her face. David hadn't spoken to me in weeks. The police came, she was dragged out of our creek & placed in a body bag. Through all this, the alien nightmares continued regardless of the psychological stress I endured stumbling upon the dead body in my own back yard.

They didn't know why there was a dead woman in a skimpy pink dress laying in our creek. They couldn't explain how she had gone so long undiscovered. Two children finding her body, she was one of three victims. David and I will live with this haunting our childhood forever. They were still looking for her left arm. It seemed it was chewed off by some animal in the woods up stream.

I was required to go back to school after about 10 days. Half the school knew about what I had gone through, but that didn't change how the key people in my life treated me outside David.

I saw Aubrey was on the playground at recess today, so I approached her. I thought maybe she could get my mind off the creek, help me escape the memories of the alien sticking his fingers in my neck and torturing me every other night.

"Hi Aubrey" I said trying to smile. Aubrey replied "Hi Daniel" with a slight smile as well. She had learned a bit about me through her friend Amber. Amber was an observer who liked to learn things about people, most everyone she was around. I suppose it made her feel more secure, which I'm sure has it's own reasons and story.

“I was wondering if you wanted to go with me some time.” I said, Aubrey replied “Go with you?” Just then Amber walked up to Aubrey and said “Hi Daniel” I looked up and said hi back, only to connect eyes with Aubrey again “I mean go out on a date to like the mall.” I said. Aubrey looked at her feet and said “I donno, I’ll have to get back to you I think.” Amber jumped in saying “She have to ask her parents.” and gave me a big smile.

In the corner of my eye I could see a figure standing there, staring at me. It was Phillip. Looking over I could see he was angry. Clearly he didn’t care about what I had gone through recently. He hated me just as much as before and after my brief time away from school, obviously just wanted to continue where we left off, the field, the ball in my hand, the threat I made for the sake of defending someone else.

The rest of recess I decided to spend in the basketball court, trying to jump off the wall and grab the hoop. Myself and a few other people were having fun doing it, and only I was able to actually grab on every other attempt as I was the tallest as well as the best jumper.

The bell rang and we were off to class. Before class started up again my teacher approached me and whispered an apology about the half dinosaur half human she had shown me on the first day of school. Apparently I was not the only one who complained, and that gave me a sense of relief.

The ride home from school was lonely, Joanna was off at some extended extra curricular activity and of course David was still coping with being the first of us to see the body. Michelle didn’t talk much as usual so it was mostly just me alone with my thoughts, not exactly where I wanted to be.

When I got home I looked for my papa but he was nowhere to be found. As I looked for him I heard booming laughter in the distance outside. The sound came from my neighbors, which happened to be my grandpa & grandma’s house, so I walked down the gravel road to see who was so happy.

As I got closer I could see my papa talking to my Uncle Ben. He always got along with my mom’s side of the family, maybe even more so than my mom. They would ride motorcycles together, go fishing together & shooting as well.

“Hi Papa” I said, my step-dad replied “Hey Daniel! Come here!!!!” and ran up to hug me. I laughed and after a brief glance my Uncle Ben just looked back to what he was working on in the shop they were in. After my papa hugged me I moped around outside the shop until I saw a flower. I bent over and picked the flower only to hear “Well, that won’t grow back for seven years.”, it was my Uncle. He was pointing out I had just ruined something rare.

I didn’t know how to react, so I just said sorry. My uncle just shrugged and went back to work. Now feeling stupid I decided I would just walk home again and play video games in my room.

My mom didn’t make dinner that night, Joanna went straight to her room once she got home, and I was happier left alone, silently tapping away at my game controller, lost in the world of Final Fantasy VII.

The next day at recess I went to check on Aubrey to see if she had asked her parents about going on a date. When I approached Aubrey she seemed happy to see me, but as I began to ask her, Phillip approached me from behind.

I would keep trying to ask Aubrey if she talked to her parents but Phillip kept interrupting with statements like “You have a problem with me?” and “What are you a wuss, you have a problem?” I could see Aubrey was getting upset with Phillip barging in on our otherwise peaceful interactions, so I asked Aubrey calmly “Would you like me to get rid of this guy?” she hesitated to respond but I could see our lives would both be better without Phillip. “Yeah keep you back turned to me you pathetic loser!” Phillip screamed at the back of my head as I faced Aubrey. I then sighed and said to Aubrey “This will take just a moment.”

Using everything my mom taught me about fighting & the anger I felt for Phillip messing with the connection I felt with Aubrey, I began slinging my fists as fast as I could at Phillip’s face. I did so in a way that me even turning to him in the first place to begin punching him would be just a blurry memory to him. The only thing Phillip knew to do was try and grab my shirt as I was still punching his face and pull me to the ground. As I fell to the ground he made the mistake of not pushing me away from him, so I continued, from the sitting position to rapidly punch him in the face as he was forced to bend forward having not yet let go of

my shirt. After a few punches from me on the ground he fell over releasing my shirt and began screaming as he cried.

One of the staff assigned to watching kids on the playground was also screaming in horror as she had caught the tail end of our fist fight.

We were both taken to the principles office but at the time I didn't understand why I was even in trouble. The entire way to the office I was asking questions like "Why am I in trouble? He was bullying me." while Phillip just screamed "He was punching me like a machine!"

Phillip and I were placed in chairs next to each other in the office. I was in the same chair the day I walked in after seeing the dinosaur human hybrid months prior.

Phillip was sniffing and wiping now drying tears from his face at this point next to me. He had a tissue the staff had given him to help him deal with everything coming out of his nose and eyes. After waiting for our parents to show up for about 30 minutes, under his breath Phillip said "You know I could beat you up if you didn't jump me like that." I smiled and replied, "Ok Phillip." He continued "You're still a wuss you know?" I smiled again "Sure Phillip." Phillip awkwardly laughed and sniffed quite a few times more.

That was the last interaction I'd ever have with him before he died weeks later.



The Eyes of Death

The creek was becoming the monster of my back yard. I learned one day in school weeks after Phillip & I fist fought that he was on his sled by the creek far upstream from me, and for some bizarre reason thought it was appropriate to slide down a hill that ended in the icy water which heavily flowed this time of year.

David was the one who broke the news to me, it was a fact that served as a silver lining on the ripped and burned pages in the book of my social life. David avoided me before as a result of death, and began talking to me again as a result of death.

Neither of us could understand how Phillip died as no one would tell us about his death beyond the fact that it was a sledding accident that ended in the creek. David and I discussed theories after our initial shock. Were there no other sled worthy hills around? Did he have something blocking the creek so he wouldn't slide right in? Maybe what was blocking him from winding up in the creek had fallen over after he failed to stop on his own short of the homemade safety precaution. Maybe as a result of that, he found himself being taken away by the heavy ice-cold current. Maybe that current lead him to a gathering of logs, and assuming he had not already drowned, he was sucked under the logs, causing him to rapidly cease existing in the world as we knew it.

My mother wanted me to stay home for a week once I told her the news, but more importantly, she also wanted me to stay away from the creek indefinitely. My Papa didn't have much to say about it and my sister Joanna was so obsessed with a relationship she was in while this all happened that it was like no one died at all to her.

It was bed time. I was still dealing with this news of Phillip's death and now I was expected to sleep. I thought I wouldn't be able to, but the hum and warmth of the furnace behind my head, and the washer below rocking the chains my bed was attached to, I couldn't resist slipping right back into the black cold room I had dreamt of so many times before.

The alien was waiting for me. I felt I had come to know him almost as well as a human can know an alien they're being abducted by. Once the fear subsided, I started to notice the creature ticked his head to the side every so often. He would make a click sound when he did this, almost like a kid I saw in my school in the special ed group sitting across from me at lunch in the cafeteria a couple weeks back. I noticed that kid a few times prior at school, but he ticked the consistently when trying to eat his homemade ham sandwich.

The alien's breath smelled like a swamp and felt like it was coming from a window being opened up to a fresh snowy day. I could tell the Alien blinked sometimes but his eyelids were transparent. Despite the creature having no indication in it's eyes alone as to where it was looking, I could tell because when it wasn't reacting to a tick, it would tilt its head to the side slightly and often stare in an obvious manner in my direction. Almost like the alien was constantly lost in deep thoughts about me or day dreaming with no thoughts at all.

I'm not sure what the alien thought was so special about me. I don't understand what was worth studying night after night, but this would be me assuming the alien was even real. I don't understand how a creature like that could even bring me to it considering how tiny my room was, how even more remarkably tiny my bedroom window was and really the only thing that I could imagine was the alien would beyond my comprehension breakdown my physical body so I could somehow be transported through the very roof over my head. A roof with no attic as it was flat & low quality at that.

Come to think of it, in this dream I could hear the rain outside hitting the thin roof few feet away from my ears. This meant I was still partially awake. Maybe I had more power than I knew, I thought to myself for a moment and then screamed at the alien "Let me go! Now!"

The alien looked at me, I was laying, paralyzed vertically in front of him, with seemingly nothing supporting my upright body, especially not my own muscles. The alien chattered to itself as if it was laughing at me. I screamed again “Let me go!” and immediately a metal clang sounded off in the distance, the black empty distance behind the creature.

The alien looked back briefly analyzing the sound behind it, then turned to me and immediately began charging me. I screamed one last time “No more!” as I glared directly into the it’s glossy dark eyes.

The alien jolted it’s head back and emitted a vibration from it’s entire body as what appeared to be fluid ejected from one of it’s eyes. Immediately my body shot backward, making the alien look like just a spec in a only a few seconds.

Now frozen in complete blackness I stood there like a puppet being controlled by an unseen master. Suddenly a sinking feeling overwhelmed my body and stars appeared all around me.

I began to realize the alien could tell I was waking up, not in the dream, but in reality. The alien charged at me because it had to rapidly inject me again, so I would not see where I was, how far I was from home.

The entire Earth sat thousands of miles beneath my feet. As I gazed down upon it, the entire planet grew larger as I began to understand I was indeed not in my physical body at any point in that black room. It was my soul the entire time, and my soul was running home.

The perfectly square roof of my house was just a dot within a massive green wilderness surrounding my entire neighborhood. I could see the race track. I could see the railroad. I could see the creek.

Everything appeared as I imagined it would be, only the creek had red marks distributed seemingly randomly up and down it. They glowed like a cats eyes glow when shine a flashlight on them in the night. I didn’t understand what these marks on the creek were, but I was already assuming what it could be.

I blinked as I fell a few hundred feet more and when I opened my eyes, I saw myself laying there. As I hovered above my body I began to wonder how I could

possibly return. “Do I just lay inside myself?” I mumbled aloud. Somehow sensing me, my body twitched and then opened its eyes. “Do I just lay inside myself?” my body had repeated my words exactly.

I turned around and tried to lay down but nothing happened. A clock radio reading 0400 near my bed was making a static noise so I moved over to try and turn it off. My hand slid right past the off switch and I could feel the electricity entering... whatever I was.

I jumped back landing in the middle of my body in response to the electricity and felt my physical self jolt up smacking my head against the ceiling that was so incredibly close to the bed anchored above the washer and dryer.

“Ow damn it!” I screamed. The furnace was still blaring, no one would have any idea what was going on in my room. There was no way I was going back to sleep so I slid down the ladder to my bed, put on a cartoon-covered bathrobe and immediately walked to the massive windows in my front room to look for at least one of the marks I saw in the creek while I was falling.

I wish I could tell you I saw nothing because I would rather this all have been simply a twisted & life-haunting dream. I...

I don't want to talk about this right now.



Shook

“Daniel” a voice came from the side of my head. “Daniel! Hey!” the voice moved outward, I could hear it more clearly now. “Daniel, wake up dude!” the voice rang again. One side of my face feels cold, my arm is covering my eyes. My head is on my desk. I’m in class again and David?

“Hi David.” I said slowly pulling my head up from my slumber. “Why are you sleeping instead of playing on the playground?” David asked. I smiled sleepily and replied “I haven’t been sleeping much at home, I’ve had a lot of bad dreams... I think my house is haunted or something.” David frowned slightly and said “It’s the creek.” I shook my head and smiled, “No, it’s a lot more than that. The heater, the washer, the dryer, the water heater, the flat roof making it easy for abductions...” David made a weird face. I wasn’t sure if he was about to start laughing or “Psssh haha ha haha!” he burst out, yep, he was laughing. Immediately I began laughing too, not because I was trying to be funny, but because he had. no idea I was serious.

David’s laughter wound down as he said “Come on, let’s go outside.” and I nodded, following him happily.

After we played on the swings and the monkey bars a bit, I noticed a small glow down a hill by the playground that lead to the soccer field. I slowly made my way there but was somewhat afraid that it would lead me to the same thing that I suspected I’d see the other night. “David, wanna play kick ball?” I asked. David replied “Yeah, but we have no friends.” I giggled and said “We have plenty of friends to play with, I have two and you have two, see?” Then I wiggled my legs in front of him as if they were separate people. David shouted “You’re so weird! I

hate you! Hahah!” and we ran down the hill to get into the bag of balls the teacher set on the field for us.

Whenever David kicked the ball to me, I would move slowly toward the other end of the field, where there was a metal fence surrounding the school property. It allowed me to get closer to the red glow. Every time he would kick the soccer ball past me, unwittingly allowing me to approach the red glow to see what it is, and also not tip David off that anything was different about me.

“Alright! Here comes my biggest kick ever! You’re probably going to die if you get in the way!” David yelled. I hollered back “Try me!” David ran up and kicked the ball extremely hard, normally his aim is really bad, but this time he got lucky and it smacked me right in the middle of my face.

Immediately my nose began to bleed before I even hit the ground. David screamed “Oh my god Daniel!” as he began to run toward me.

As I rolled to my knees I grabbed my shirt and pressed it to my nose trying to stop the blood flow out of my face. Right in front of my eyes, the red glow burned as I found myself forgetting about my injury and lost myself to curiosity.

Slowly standing I walked forward to the glow. David slowed his run behind me, wondering why I was acting so strange. I wasn’t crying, I wasn’t saying anything, I was just silently walking away from him, toward the woods for what I’m sure he imaging had no reason for it.

“Daniel, want me to get the nurse?” David said. I replied “I’m fine, come here.” David said nervously, “Uh, I’m gonna get the nurse!” and ran off in the opposite direction. I don’t think the old David would have done that, but I think he was getting the same weird feeling he got before, when we found the dead bodies in the creek. He wasn’t wrong to run away. About 10 meters into the shadows of the woods, I could see a deer with everything below the ribs ripped clean away. That was the glow. Just like I saw in the creek, the glow was death.

The bell rang off in the distance, but I didn’t really care much about the rules anymore. The glow of the remains of this deer faded in my eyes, as if my mere presence had put the deer’s soul to rest. Or maybe I just had some god-given gift

that helped me locate the dead, and it only lasted till I could confirm each location to identify those fallen.

“Daniel! I have the nurse!” I heard a desperate David screaming behind me. I turned and smiled with blood gushing down my face. I could feel the blood seeping through my teeth, it was as if I zoned out entirely on the deer, grinning the entire time.

I felt a cold metal smack against my head, I had lost consciousness & fallen against the fence that separated the kids from the woods.

I woke up to the sound of crying. It was David and I was now in the nurses room. David was talking to my mom, he kept saying he was sorry for knocking me out with a soccer ball but I could hear my mom trying to reassure him, letting David know that I had a history of passing out and it wasn't him.

Fact is, I had a heart condition, or so I thought I did, but every doctor I went to couldn't identify what the problem was or if there even was a problem. Whenever the doctors tested me, I wouldn't pass out or have heart pains or anything, so of course on paper I'm perfectly healthy. For all I know it could have been the mere sight of blood on my own shirt. I couldn't handle a half-human half-dinosaur, why would I be able to cope with my face gushing blood?

“I'm sorry David!” I yelped trying to get him to stop crying. “Oh! Daniel! You're not dead!” David said sounding like he was full of joy. My mom stood up and said “How many times do I have to tell you to put pressure on your nose the moment you start bleeding?” I replied “Thanks mom! I'm fine! Can we go home?” My mom shook her head and held up my back pack. “You know I have to go back to work after I drop you off right? Now I have to work late.” She said. I replied “I'll try not to bleed myself unconscious next time.” My mom sighed, hopefully getting my implied point, and drove me home.

As I stood in my door and watched my mom drive back over our little creek bridge to go to work, I realized it was only 1pm, and I still had around 3 hours before my sister or anyone else got home.

I don't know what got into me, but I had the overwhelming urge to get a closer look at the red glowing shapes I saw in the creek before. I ran half way toward the water before I remembered I was highly prone to passing out, and should probably get some calories in my body for energy.

Running back inside I grabbed a bag of marshmallows and sprinted down the hill to begin my investigation. The first glow I found was a fish that was smashed under a rock. It had clearly been dead for some time. Walking up the side of the creek I found another dead animal, it was a rabbit that had most of it's body eaten, clearly by both insects and probably coyotes.

Finding these dead creatures felt a lot like easter egg hunting, only the eggs didn't glow like these bodies did, it was easier than any hunt I had experienced before, and nowhere near as lighthearted.

For about 30 minutes I kept finding small animals, I even found a cat, only it was just the skeleton. I was surprised that the bones would still glow after all that time being dead, but they did.

Clouds started gathering overhead and rain began to fall. I decided I would search just a little bit more, then go home. My goal was to clear out everything around my house. I didn't want to be able to see any glowing from where I lived. It would be a constant reminder of death, and sometimes you just don't want to think about that.

The bodies were so repetitious as a result of the carnivorous animals in the area we lived. We didn't get bears much, or really any large predators so the body I approached last, the size, it didn't make sense.

Back in the woods at my school, where I saw the deer, that was miles from my home and was directly connected to a far deeper forest than what surrounded my home. Railroad tracks, a race track, a busy road, all neighboring this little canyon that my whole family lived in. So what was a large dead body doing here? No coyote could kill something that big.

As I approached I saw antlers, it was a male deer. I went through that entire preliminary thought process pointlessly. Maybe a bear did cross over, or maybe this deer died of a disease.

Looking more closely at the deer I began to see a wiggling in it's neck. I wasn't touching it, nor was I doing anything to it outside running away in horror. The red glow faded on the deer and that was good enough.

Slipping across the rocks and sometimes sliding in the water, I eventually made it home, covered in mud and feeling 100% done with the creek for the time being.



Eyes Never Opened

Spring break had come. I was sitting in my room looking at my old TV. The beautiful imagery of Final Fantasy 7 glowed in front of me. The characters all looked like hip young adults, something that I desired to be. Being a child felt so endless like waiting for a Christmas that was never going to come. I had already invested about 24 hours of combined gameplay into this game. I planned on spending my entire spring break in my room pinned between the dresser and the washing machine, playing Final Fantasy 7.

After a couple of days my mission of complete isolation appeared to be successful until my mother called me out to help her make dinner. She said “I’m having a friend come over today” and I replied “Have I met this friend mom?” My mom answered “No this is a friend that I met recently at my job. She’s very fragile so be nice to her. Okay Daniel?” Scoffing I replied “Mom I think you’re mistaking me for Joanna. She’s the rude one, I’m the quiet one who never gets in anyone’s business.” My mom laughed as she continued to cling dishes together in the sink seemingly incoherently.

After I cleared off the table and my mom had finished making our meal we heard a knock at our large thick rustic looking wooden door. My mom introduced her to everyone in the house saying her name was Cynthia. Right away I could see that she was pregnant. But out of my childhood, why would I point out this specific story? The pregnant woman who is a friend of my mom. I was just talking about discovering dead animals and suddenly I’m talking about a pregnant woman. Well it’s not hard to figure out.

Cynthia was in fact fragile. Throughout all of dinner I could see that she was emotionally distraught. She would say everything as if she was about to break down crying any moment. And I had already figured out completely why. This woman was trying to hold off going to the doctor. She seemed like such a nice lady but that wasn't a very nice thing to do. She was trying to hold on to the baby inside of her. She was trying to ignore reality. You see when a woman has a baby that's alive and well inside of her, there would be no reason for me to see any optical illusion or otherwise hallucinate with whatever gift I was given by the alien radiating from any section of her body... yet this woman's belly glowed. I imagine it would have glowed less yesterday and maybe last week there was no glow at all. As I listened to this woman talk I began to realize that her avoiding the doctor wasn't a result of anything except for financial hardship. It didn't take long conversing with my mom for her to break down in front of all of us talking about how she didn't have health insurance and that the baby had stopped kicking days ago.

After some convincing my mom finally got her to agree to go to the E.R. with her. Seemingly without hesitation a selfish thought crossed my mind. You see ever since I gained this ability I had planned to avoid it. Curiosity caught the best of me one day but it was a necessary curiosity to help avoid future incidences of me investigating or being reminded of my ability.

I searched the creek to rid myself of the constant red glow I would see outside my window just by passing by on a normal day. But this walked right into my front room and now unforgivable thoughts centered on myself crossed my mind. "Great my spring break is ruined. Now I have to think about a dead baby" I said to myself, and I curse myself for having such a thought as if I was the victim. As if me losing my happiness in a simple break from an otherwise relatively happy elementary school experience was really the true problem here. But what goes on in your mind often defines much of your future and then that night I defined my own future.

The rest of that week I did in fact spend weighed down by a cloud of doom over my head. Multiple times throughout my break I asked my mom what happened to that woman and whenever I asked my mom simply said that she didn't want to talk about it. That just made the cloud over my head grow darker.

On the first day of school back I saw David again. Selfishly I shared with David what had happened to that poor woman, how it happened right in front of me and he of course was not happy whatsoever to hear this information. That was basically the only conversation I had with David that day. He was just the kind of kid to avoid problems and sometimes that means avoiding people who bring problems to you. I understood it, but I didn't respect it. For some reason watching the short brown hairs on the back of David's head blow in the wind as he walked away triggered a sudden realization in me that boy who reminded me of the alien... I hadn't seen him in a very very long time. The kid who was in special ed class, who I would see sitting across from me during lunch once in a while, he disappeared right around the same time I fought back at the alien. But how would I ask about who he is to anyone? Walk up to a teacher and say "Hey you know that special ed kid who twitches funny? Have you seen him around? No?" I don't think I could do that. The moment you even mention a special ed kid they immediately consider writing you up for a hate crime it seems.

Aubrey however was still around. We just kind of fell apart after the whole Philip incident. I mean how do you recover with someone after you beat someone up in front of them and then that person just happens to die from an accident not long after? What's the opening statement and a reintroduction there? "Hey remember that time a beat up that kid who's dead now anyway what were we talking about?" No. For me school was becoming more and more lonely every day and even that kid I saved from bullying. He was only talking to me at the time because I was the person that would save him from his troubles and now that he needed no more saving. It was like I was a ghost to him too.

Regardless it's time to go home again. The same school bus, the same driveway, the same time of day, the same door, the same house, the same bedroom, the same foam pillow... flip out the lights Daniel and now you're dreaming again. And what dream am I going to have now? Oh that's right...

...the same dream.



Your Dead Girlfriend

The alien was prepared this time. He pulled one of my eyes out, I tried to scream, my mouth was stuck open, my vocal chords were paralyzed. With my remaining eye I tried to get a good look at the alien as I yelled inside my own mind, suffering silently to the world around me. The alien looked healed. Maybe it was a different alien whose eyes didn't explode, but it seemed this one was trying to take an eye for an eye... no, he... it, whatever it is, put my eye back. But it felt different. My eye felt a warmth at the stem.

The alien reached forward and pulled my other eye, with seemingly no resistance. I could see with my freshly replaced eye in seemingly the same way. No blur, 20/20... or I guess just 20 vision.

After inspecting and touching my eye in a few areas, it was also returned to my head. The creature seemed to be in a hurry. Immediately it thrust its hand into my chest and pulled out my heart, or so it looked like my heart, I have no real understanding of my own anatomy. I screamed in my head again, I knew the alien could hear me, I must have looked like a fool with my mouth stuck open and nothing coming out. Just standing there, frozen, a gaping hole in my chest. I lost consciousness.

A happy voice, "Good morning, good morning, good morning to y..." "Shut up mom!" I screamed abruptly coming out of my sleep. "Greg! Don't talk to me like that!" my mom yelled back only to be interrupted again "Mom my chest is bleeding!" I yelped. Immediately my mom ran out, grabbed my papa and before I knew it we were in the urgent care facility waiting for a doctor to decide if I'm worth his or her time.

I blanked out completely in the truck ride there, so much of my life felt unfathomable now. Why was I being tortured? What did the alien do to me this time? And who could I tell about this without being sent to a mental institution?

“Haha Daniel! You’re face is turning green!” my sister Joanna jested across from me in the waiting room. She could make fun, but we both know she wouldn’t have come with my mom, and papa unless she was also concerned. I just glared at my sister and rolled my eyes in a slightly amused manner. I wasn’t in much pain, I just didn’t want to ignore a chest wound for the sake of common sense.

I got to the doctor’s examination room after sitting in the waiting room for four hours. I guess chest bleeding wasn’t a huge priority to them. After an additional 30 minutes of waiting a nurse came in, asked me a bunch of mundane questions & left. Another 15 minutes and the doctor came in, he lifted up my shirt and scoffed, then left the room after a few generic comments about my sleep behavior and even gave me a speech about self harm. I was confused about all this but it became clear he had concluded I had done this to myself either consciously or unconsciously.

The wound on my chest had already dried, and no stitches were required, apparently the alien had done either a great job making it look like I hurt myself, or a bad job simply cleaning up my wound entirely. I mean it stuck it’s fingers through my skin before without a mark, why did it leave a mark this time?

As we left the urgent care my sister indicated that she wanted to drive. My mom laughed at the idea as she was nowhere near old enough yet. My Papa remained in our truck the entire time we were inside. Apparently while I was getting looked at, he got fish and chips. I helped myself to chips.

Everything on the road home seemed normal, my head was leaned on the back passenger window out of boredom. My sister was on the other side of the back seat asleep on her window. Everything felt so typical till we pulled off the main road onto our gravel road. From seemingly nowhere a man in a small black pickup truck collided with the middle of our truck. Me being immediately on the other side of the door he t-boned, I flew back and full on slammed against my sister. My

mom's window shattered and my Papa was completely unaffected aside from a few pieces of shattered glass scraping his face as it flew past him.

Without hesitation the man who hit us, clearly in a daze screamed at us to see if we were ok, but despite how hard he hit us, we were not the people he should have been concerned with. No one else seemed to notice it, but his girlfriend or whoever she was, who sat in the passenger seat of his car was clearly dead.

She did not glow to my eyes. That ability was clearly gone. But I felt a cold in her, that I did not feel about anyone else around me. I didn't realize it till this moment, maybe it was because I surrounded myself with the living, and there was no inconsistency that stood out in this new sensation, yet in my chest, when I looked at the woman slammed against the black truck's dashboard, I felt nothing but silent, still, cold.

"Are you ok! Oh my god I'm so sorry! Where did you come from! Oh man! God!" the man yelled at us in our large orange vehicle as we all recovered.

My papa looked back to me "Daniel, are you hurt anywhere?" I replied "My chest is bloody again but I think I just ripped the scab back open." meanwhile Joanna was just sitting there wailing in horror "Owww, my ear!" she screamed. Apparently a piece of glass had somehow found it's way into her ear canal.

"Let me help you! I'm so sorry!" screamed the man outside our shattered right window. I yelled back "Dude, your girlfriend is dead, worry about her." I felt the focus of most everyone involved suddenly shift to me in a horribly uncomfortable way.

The driver of the black truck muttered confused under his breath and looked back at his girlfriend. He saw she was hunched forward and began screaming her name. My family kept looking back and forth at me, then at the man in the little black truck trying to wake his girlfriend up.

I muttered "She's not going to wake up, she's dead." My mom replied "Daniel, we get it." my Papa added "You guys should walk home, I'll deal with the police and everything." None of us were in the mood to deal with any more waiting

rooms or doctors that day, we walked down the gravel hill, to our home, to self-medicate.

That night over dinner my Papa was looking at me funny. I asked “What’s up papa?” he replied “How did you know that woman was dead?” I answered “I... did she look dead?” my Papa answered me “No, she looked unconscious.” I looked down at my plate. “I was abducted by an alien... I’ve been abducted a lot... I think they put stuff inside me... I think I can do things... or know things now.” My papa immediately rolled his eyes and laughed to himself. “When you want to tell me what was going through your head, why you sounded so confident, come let me know ok?” he said as he stood up and gave his food to our dog.

I let out a sigh. That was the exact reaction I expected. I followed up my last statement “That was the chest wound I had... I think they ripped out my heart and... I dunno.” my Papa replied from a distance now as he closed the bedroom door, “Ok, goodnight Daniel.”

I looked back at those remaining at the dinner table. My sister was staring at me. “What?” I said. Joanna replied “You’re an idiot, someone died and you’re joking around?” I let out a big sigh. I replied “You’re right, I’m an idiot.”

Weeks later I discovered something new about myself on the playground. Something that probably ruined a few people’s lives... I’ll talk about it later though.



Awake

Months passed, I was laying in bed, looking at the wood poles bracing the top of my ceiling. Why was I alive? Why were any of us alive? Why was my existence surrounded by death? Why was I given the ability to know automatically when death was near me?

A few weeks back one of our teachers had a heart attack in the middle of class. No students were being noisy or anything. Many people act like you only get heart attacks when someone surprises you or you're exercising... Mr. Lucas died right in front of his 5th grade class, and he wasn't even standing up. Just died in his chair and it took the class around a half hour to notice.

Across the building, I felt him die. The absence of warmth haunted me many walls away, I could even tell you what his soul looked like if I closed my eyes. Yellow, it glowed, it was hollow in the inside, it had a tail, like a neon sea creature if anything.

"Daniel turn out your light!" my mom shouted from the front room. I was so sick of being tormented by things beyond most anyone's comprehension, let alone the fact I'm just a kid. How am I supposed to be functional, even remotely sane, in an environment that seemingly constantly reminds me of the worst part of life, one that throws it in my face even if I run.

What happens if I go to sleep? I get abducted again? "Mom! I'll turn off the light in a minute!" I yelled back.

My mother wasn't interested in anything but absolute compliance. Her constant working, dealing with the people she encountered every day, it made her head strong, unwilling to budge for most anyone, especially me.

"You go to bed now or you're in trouble!" my mom hollered back. I replied "Oh what are you going to do!?" and my mom immediately slapped her belt against my door. As the belt impacted I could hear the cheap wooden door creek as if it had been dented from the outside.

I screamed again "So you're going to hit me! Go ahead and beat me then mom! I don't care! I just want the light to be on! Leave m..." as I screamed I heard a subtle noise I don't even know how to describe. I stopped speaking all together. After a few seconds of silence I heard my mom scream in the most horrified voice I had ever endured. "Call the hospital! Oh god! Please!" my mom desperately moaned.

I jumped down the ladder off my bunk bed and opened the door. Blood was flicked on my chin and neck as my mom spun around clutching her eyes. Both her hands were firmly locked on her face as I could see blood gushing through her fingers. "Daniel! Daniel... I..." my mom stuttered and then collapsed smacking her head against our kitchen counter just outside my bedroom door.

I dropped to my knees and began screaming "Mom! What happened!? What did you do!?" She had to have put something in her eyes, I couldn't see through the door, I had no idea what was going on. My sister and Papa were now closely crouching behind me. My Papa had a phone in his hand and was dialing for help.

Desperate to know what happened to my mom's eyes, I slowly put both my hands on hers and began to pull them away from her face. Even in her fall, she had a death grip on her own cheeks, the bridge of her nose and eyebrows, but as I applied pressure away, it was like her muscles relaxed, and willingly moved with the intentions of my mind.

Initially my mother's eyelids were caved in, as if her eyes had melted in her head. But I didn't see this until I had begun manually turning her unconscious head toward me. Right before me I saw her eye sockets appear to almost be entirely empty, I also witness them once again filling, revealing blood covered, but fully restored green eyes.

My mother was immediately conscious, and blinking the blood out of her eyes. She was calm and smiled as soon as she realized we were all around her. Papa was speechless and Joanna with tears in her eyes screamed “What was that!? That’s impossible! What is going on!? Why!? What!?” I looked back at Joanna equally horrified by what had just happened.

As my mom continued to smile, she stood up, and my Papa proceeded to tell the emergency operator to send someone out regardless of the development as none of us had any idea what was going on.

By the time the first responders showed up, my mom had wiped off all the blood off her face, put on makeup and cleaned up the house. We were out in the middle of nowhere after all, she had time.

The ambulance drivers looked over my mom & concluded we were all genuinely insane. My mom was honest with them about what happened, but her constant smiling didn’t help any of us appearing less crazy.

At about 4am I finally got to sleep, and by 6:45am I was off to school. Papa said I could stay home, but I really didn’t want to be anywhere near that house for a while.

I didn’t talk to anyone till lunch time came around. David came up to me when I was eating to apologize for being distant from me again, but I wasn’t in the mood and screamed at him to go away.

I continued to eat my mashed potatoes and chicken nuggets alone, a 12 seat table, sitting by myself. I would dip the chicken nuggets in the mashed potatoes, scoop some of the potatoes up to my mouth with the nuggets, eat, and repeat. Sometimes when I got thirsty, I would just drink my chocolate milk, and think about how much I hated everyone at this point.

“Nice to finally meet you with the lights on Daniel.” a voice said coming from the corner of my right eye. Refusing to look at them I replied “Piss off.” I could hear them chuckling under their breath. They continued, “You did the same thing to me that you did to your mom last night... I would be mad but I did that to someone when I was younger too, so I understand.”

I was frozen. Was I dreaming? What sociopath nut job was talking to me? Why would they... how would they know... I screamed “What!?” as I aggressively looked up at them.

It was the special ed kid.

A voice came from the side of the cafeteria from the faculty member who originally pulled me off Phillip when I was punching his face in. “Calm down Daniel, I will take you right back to the principal!” A few kids laughed then went back to eating.

The special ed kid sat down. “So... I just thought you should know I’m here, even under this metal roof.” the freckled boy said as he pointed up at the ceiling of the school. He continued “Can I have your apple?” as he reached out and snatched it off my tray, I remained frozen with complete tunnel vision. The boy said “Look, I can tell you’re in shock and we can talk more later.” he chomped into my apple, eating relatively normal, as if he was actually human.

As I continued my horrified gaze the boy asked “Did you want me to take care of anyone by the way? Your drunk uncle? Your snobby sister? I can put quite the scare in some people, not you though... not on the ship at least.”

I was done looking at him. I saw a glint in his eyes that haunted me to my core. I mumbled under my breath “Please go away.” Then I looked up... he was still there. He chimed in “Oh, sorry, yes.” the boy bit another chunk of the apple off & stood up to walk away.

He was about 20 feet away before I realized I peed myself. Without hesitating, I grabbed my chocolate milk and dumped it in my lap. “Damn it... I spilled... my milk!!” I screamed in attempt to hide the fact I was trying not to cry.

I grabbed napkins to clean up what I had now masked as a milk spill, and the lunch bell rang, ending our meal break. Everyone walked away as if nothing had happened, except for me.



Imposters

I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want the dreams, I don't want this creature following me around wherever I go. I'm not an idiot, it played all its' cards on the table when it approached me last week.

Every day at school since has been torture for me. I would see it looking at me non stop at lunch, watching me at recess... and why? Because of the metal roof on the school. Laying here in bed, thinking about all this... worried it might take me in my sleep again, simply because my roof is mostly just tar and wood.

But if... it can't see me when I'm under metal... if it can't take me...

Jumping up I walked nervously into the kitchen. I grabbed a pot, and a long strand of aluminum foil. I walked back to my bed with the pot & the foil, climbing up my ladder cautiously so I did not drop either.

There... now I'm safe. The pot on my head, the foil wrapped around my entire body... they can't take me. Right?

Drifting off to sleep was difficult, every move I made was a crunch or a crinkle sound attempting to wake me. But I was safe... I hoped I was.

Suddenly everything felt warm. Tall grass surrounded me. A woman stood across from me in a field. From the back she looked like my teacher. She turned around... no, she was beautiful, she had perfect breasts, her brunette hair flowed over her naked chest, she was calling my name. "Daniel... I want you to be with me." the naked woman said as she began to approach me in the grass.

Smiling uncomfortably I replied “Hi... I’m... who are you?” Immediately the woman reached down and began touching herself as she continued to walk across the field toward me. “Be with me Daniel” she said again. A warm breeze flowed through my hair. The sunlight in the background gleamed off her perfectly toned skin. She now stood in front of me, reached her hand out as I only stared at her crotch wondering what or who I was even looking at. Gently she put her hand under my chin and brought my eyes up to hers. “I love you Daniel. Kiss me.” she said. Leaning forward our lips connected as her hands began running up and down my body.

“Daniel” she said “Daniel!!!” she screamed, “Daniel come out here!! NOW!!!” she screamed even louder as her face turned gray and her eyes turned black. Jumping out of my rest with the pot spinning around my head from the momentum. I heard it in real life. “Daniel! I sacrificed everything for you! Stop making this difficult!!!!” the voice screamed. Keeping the aluminum foil around my body and the pot on my head I slid over to the wall and began to look out my window... it was the gray, the alien in the special ed boy’s body. His eyes kept blinking from human to black. He was staring right back at me through my tiny square wooden-framed bedroom window.

“Take the pot off your head Daniel!” screamed the alien again. A drop of sweat slid down the side of my face, the aluminum foil isolating my body heat and my nerves combined began to trigger claustrophobia, I had no idea how to react. “You need to take that pot off your head! I’m trying to help you! It’ll stop me but it won’t stop them!” Still having no idea what to do, I reacted on instinct and ripped off a piece of aluminum, jamming it in the edges behind my window frame till I could no longer see the alien.

I heard my Papa scream to the outside through my sister’s window “Hey freak! Get off my property or I’m calling the cops!” immediately a deafening silence consumed my ears. A silent rumble began to shake my bed, I looked up and before my eyes the wood ceiling began to warp. It was bending outward, groaning under the strength of whatever was pulling it upward.

Screaming in terror I slammed my hands over my ears as the unnatural deep and bone-shaking sounds vibrated through my room. With little resistance a massive section of my roof was ripped off. I kept my eyes open, my screams of terror turned into screams of rage. Despite my entire body being consumed with anger, I was unsympathetically torn from my bed. The pot falling off my head and the aluminum foil now dangling to my side briefly till it began twisting, eventually falling off me, slowly drifting to the roof of my house.

I scream angrily again but felt so powerless. This invisible beam was pulling me forcefully away from the world I knew. To my left I saw a spark bounce off the large coal-textured ship. Another spark. I couldn't hear anything but the beaming deep noise of whatever was pulling me in, but I could look down, and there was my papa. He had his rifle and was shooting at the ship. His mouth was moving, he was crying, I couldn't tell what he was saying, but as his tears fell and he raised his gun again to fire once more, my vision went black. I was gone. The ship was gone. We were all lost to the world again.

As I woke I could see my right arm was missing. I was standing vertically but not under my own power, I was in the dark room with seemingly no walls. Black tubes were packed into the stump where my arm used to be. I felt fine, I felt at peace. One of the tubes no doubt was drugging me to feel this way. There were three aliens now. One of them was seemingly trying to remove something from my arm which was hovering in the air near them.

Hours passed and they performed numerous procedures on me. Most of them seemed to be extractions, as if they were trying to undo what someone else had done to me. The tubes were removed from my body but I didn't bleed. I wasn't sure why. The aliens reattached my limbs, and then I was gone again, lost in the lack of consciousness, lost in the dark emptiness.

I woken up to see a bird looking down at me, the bright blue sky beaming through the hole in my ceiling. The bird tilted its head at me, then flew away. I was in my bed, but the damage that had been done the night prior was all still there.

I could hear my mom crying in the other room. I could hear the chatter of other women & men in my home. Slowly I climbed down the ladder, my arm hurt a little, but so did the rest of my body.

My front room had three police officers in it, as well as my sisters, mom & papa. I stood there for a moment rubbing my eyes as they all continued to talk to one another. Joanna screamed “Daniel!” and immediately ran over to me.

My mom let out a painful gasp and ran over to me as well. Before I knew it everyone was hugging me at once, it was nice to know I would be missed if I ever left for good.

One of the officer’s spoke up “Mam, ya’ll said your eyes exploded out of your head the other day, we show up, your eyes are fine. You say your kid is taken by aliens another day, your kid is right here. Can you explain?”

My papa stopped hugging me and turned to the officer, he said “Listen, we’ll handle this. I’m sorry for any inconvenience.” The officer replied “We’re probably going to have child services pay you a visit, this seems like an unstable home, both mentally with the mom thing & physically with whatever you did to the roof.” My mom hugged me harder when she heard the officer say that. My papa said “Thank you for your help on this officer, I’m sorry we called.”

Right after the police left my papa said “Wow, you call the cops to protect your kid, and they threaten to take your kid.” I think we all knew, if something came up in the future, the cops wouldn’t be involved.

A week passed since the incident, I was in the bathroom at school, using a urinal. A voice I never wanted to hear again resonated through my ears.

“I need to give you back what they took Daniel. I’m not done with you.” I felt a pinch in the back of my neck, my head smacked against the yellow tiled wall, I was gone.



Julia's Glow

It was summer. I was with my dad in Ohio. We had just arrived at a cabin in the woods, by a lake. There was a girl there, her name was "Julia." She had long curly brown hair, she had a smile that lit up the room & a look in her eye that felt like a beam of energy shooting through me whenever we made eye contact.

I was 5'10 despite being so young, she was about 5'1 despite being 4 years older than me. We were listening to Sugar Ray on the radio, standing out on a beautiful deck, looking into the woods. She made me feel good about myself. The subtle touches of my shoulder, my hand, her giggling after every other thing I said. I was lucky to have someone distract me from the last couple months of my life.

A flashback thought crossed my mind, the boy in the bathroom... he must have injected me with something... done something to me. I woke up sitting in the corner of the bathroom. A janitor was shaking me, the female principal wouldn't come in the bathroom and he was the only option. He smelled like alcohol.

Shaking out of my thoughts, Julie and I decided to play darts. She tried, but I won with little experience. "Good job Daniel, you're a natural." she said. I replied "Thank you for letting me win." she laughed. She was so cute, wearing jean shorts, a yellow spaghetti strap top, a thin metal necklace around her neck... I was entranced by her.

Every week Julie and I would see each other at church. My father was part of a very small gathering he sometimes preached at. There were about 15 members, and we were all pretty closely involved. Having dinner parties at each other's houses, going out to eat after every day of church. It often felt like none of us were

really there for God, but just there to have friends... to have a social life. God was just the guilt that made us responsible enough to show up every week.

One day we were all praying in a circle in church, someone was praying about how their really old grandpa got cancer, and they asked God to save him. Two weeks later, the same person would be there, saying they understood why God let their grandpa die. But my question is, if God didn't want him to get cancer, why did he get cancer in the first place? So what is the point in praying about it?

A lot of times when we would pray in a circle, Julie and I would try to hold each other's hands, because of my skepticism, I would often have a hard time not laughing when someone would ask God for something really stupid. Julie was more respectful than me, she would squeeze my hand the moment she detected I was about to laugh, and that would help prevent me from losing it.

My dad only got to see me during the summers while my Papa was out fishing in Alaska. My mom left my Dad because he was accused by her two sisters & her own child of being inappropriate to an illegal extent toward them. Maybe that is why he resorted to religion so strongly, to make sense of his own sins, to try and accept himself despite what a monster my family members accused him of being.

One day my dad decided to go over to Julie's parents house after church. The majority of the church followed.

There was a silly little pond outside Julie's house and she asked if I wanted to go out on a paddle boat with her and a friend of both of ours, Michael. Michael decided to bring a fishing pole for the pond, and pretty quickly caught what looked like a catfish. "Oh my gosh!" Michael said "This is so gross!" Julie paddled back to shore with me, Michael in the back of the boat & immediately her dad said we needed to let it go. I replied "We're not going to eat it?" and her dad said "No, it's too small." I was confused as the fish was clearly wounded, and putting it back, well, it just seemed wasteful considering we half killed it by catching it, and now it was just going to die anyway, uneaten. As if it was all pointless.

We played in the pond a little longer till I said something to Julie. Michael had made a joke about how he thought Julie liked me and I replied with "I hope so."

Julie reacted by pushing me in the water, and we all laughed. I laughed last thanks to me needing to catch my breath.

Julie promptly suggested I wash off now that I was covered in pond water, so the three of us walked over to her neighbors house which was twice as big as hers, much newer and unoccupied as the neighbors were on vacation.

I was about to hop in the shower, Julie was the only one in the room with me. Michael was in the music room of the mansion, strumming away on a guitar and singing funny lyrics like “Don’t eat the fish, the itty bitty fish, I think the meat would be so bland.”

Julie looked at me with a smile, clearly not ready to leave the room so I could shower. I said “Well, I’m going to hop in.” Julie replied “Want me to join you?” My heart fluttered. I then laughed awkwardly and said “You... want to shower with me?” She laughed and said “Don’t be too long.” as she walked out of the room.

I blew it. She would have probably showered with me... why did I say that? Why didn’t I just say “Yes please, thank you.” or at the very least “I would love that.” The warm water felt incredible, but I couldn’t help being upset with myself. I thought about what it would be like if she was in the shower with me, would she have taken her swimsuit & shorts off? Would we have kissed?

Before it was time for me to return home to Washington State, we had one more cabin trip to go on with a few church members. Michael was there, so was one of my sisters, and Michael’s sister. Julie, most importantly, remained close to me the entire first day of us being there. All the kids were to sleep upstairs in sleeping bags in a big carpeted room of the cabin. It consumed the entire upper floor.

Julie was staring at me from her sleeping bag for most of the time the lights remained on in the cabin. She was smiling every time I looked at her, and I would smile back upon seeing this.

There was a pillow between her sleeping bag and mine. She had put her hand under the pillow in a way that only made sense if she was reaching out to me, so I reached my hand out, and held hers. No one else in the room had any idea.

After a short while the lights went out and that's when Julie began moving toward me, slipping her body inside my sleeping bag.

She immediately began kissing me and I kissed her back just as aggressively. I had never kissed a girl before this moment, but it seemed like I was doing everything right. With one hand I unbuttoned her shorts & slipped my hand into her underwear. This again was the first time I had ever touched someone like this.

Julie, now on top of me, began breathing heavily as my fingers moved in and out of her. She continued to kiss me and began to grind on me as well. After twenty minutes of one of the best moments in my life to date, she buttoned her shorts back up and kissed me goodnight.

I was glowing, and not to my knowledge at the time, it wasn't even over.

The next morning Julie and I were the first two people to wake up in the house. I found her sitting on the couch downstairs, and realizing we were still alone, we again threw ourselves at each other in exactly the same way we had last night, only now on the couch in the cabin front room. The fabric of the couch had a purple base color, and a design tributing the natives of America. I ran my hand up and down her legs, I pulled her body as close to me as I could, I tried to make her feel as loved & blissful as I knew how,. She seemed so happy.

"Good morning!" my dad's voice boomed from a back room. Julie quickly sat up while zipping up her pants. I slowly reacted with a smile and a good morning back.

I could see Julie was beaming. It was sad I had to go home soon... back to that bedroom, back to that school... but my mom had custody, and the only reason I wanted to stay was the thought of a beautiful girl who would probably be embarrassed to ever publicly date me considering our age gap.

The plan ride home was a cold one.



No More

“Excuse me.” a voice came from beyond the darkness created by my own eyes. I opened them. “Hello.” said the flight attendant standing next to my aisle seat. I replied “Oh, hi, I... did I do something?” she laughed and answered “No, I was just wondering why you didn’t impregnate Julia.” I was wide awake now. No words, I had no ability to talk. The flight attendant continued “Was she everything you wanted? Shame about being so far away from her now... I wonder if she’ll sleep with Michael next.” I couldn’t even look at her, my eyes were fixated on the drop down tray in front of me.

I heard a familiar voice laugh near first class. The flight attendant dusted off her vest and walked away as if she didn’t just say anything mortifying to me at all. The laugh in the distance continued, but I was so deep in my thoughts, so physically numb, I couldn’t do anything but remain still, almost as if I was in shock, paralyzed. While brief, that woman attacked my most vulnerable place, and turned me upside down as if it was nothing.

By the time the plane landed, I had mostly recovered. I had high anxiety about the laughter I heard while the flight attendant harassed me. Whoever it was would no doubt be gone by the time I got to the front as first class always leaves the plane first.

The plane was a cluttered mess as we tried to get off, a typical routine, everyone crushed together in the long aluminum can, trying to gather their shame covering cloths packed in their nearly identical zipper bags smacking each other clumsily as they removed said storage containers from the overhead bins. Upper body strength escapes so many of us.

Walking forward I could see all the seats within my line of sight were empty. It was a relief. Just before getting off the plane I noticed one of the first class bathrooms were open. I could only see the lights surrounding a mirror inside, upon the reflection sat a face, smiling at me. The moment I recognized who it was, I ran.

Laughter from the bathroom exploded after my first few steps, then faded as I got away from the boy, the alien, whoever he really was. It seemed every time I was around a metal roof or housing, he had to follow me.

I came to a complete stop just before stumbling through the exit of my gate. I don't want to live like this. I don't want to keep running. I don't want to keep getting abducted or drugged.

Taking a deep breath I walked back on the plane, ignoring the looks people were giving me as I passed them. I had pushed half these people out of the way in my earlier sprint, now I'm pushing past them again, I felt rude, but my anger made me blind to caring whatsoever.

The boy from special ed class didn't expect me to return, he was still chuckling to himself in the bathroom. The flight attendant who harassed me earlier said "Oh, excuse me!" clearly confused and conflicted by my return to the plane.

Without hesitation I grabbed a fork from the flight attendant food distribution cart and planted it as deep as I could into the neck of the special ed boy.

As soon as the fork went completely in, making contact with the bones in his spine, his eyes went black. He had a look of absolute shock & terror, as if he was a sibling just playing pranks and someone just snapped. But this boy was not my sibling, this boy was not even human.

Immediately behind me I heard a loud smack, it was the flight attendant, she had fallen, her head colliding with the metal cart I just grabbed a fork from. Maybe he was controlling her telepathically? Or maybe I was a nut job and this was all a hallucination. Either way, I didn't want to be around to try and explain any of this.

As the other airline staff members crowded around the fallen woman, I looked back to see the alien's human skin facade melting away. How stupid, there was no

disguise, no failsafe what began to show itself was just a smaller version of the aliens I encountered in my dreams. Now I definitely had to get out of here.

Walking away quickly, but not in a manner that implied I was guilty of anything, I made my way to the baggage claim relatively fast.

My sister was already there, as soon as she saw me she yelled “What took you so long dork?” I didn’t reply.

Shortly after my mom showed up and drove us home. She just talked about how much she missed us. She also made a joke about her eyes not exploding in a while which was not even remotely funny considering what I had just gone through.

It’s easy to laugh at past pain, it’s impossible to genuinely laugh if the pain is ongoing, for me at least.

Being in my old foam bed was incredible, next to the hum of the furnace, the washer and dryer actively cleaning the clothes we hadn’t washed before we packed to come home... the noise, it drowned out my thoughts of the hopefully dead alien that stalked me wherever I went and the horrible way I felt when the flight attendant dug right into my most intimate experience, ever.

Stabbing that freak in the neck however? That was therapy, that was me dealing with the endless times I had been tortured on that craft, the endless harassment I endured & my vengeance for whatever they did to me.

With all the familiar ambient noise, I began to fall asleep, but before I was even completely unconscious, I was already on another ship again. They could have taken me at any point during the summer, but here I was, all of a sudden the center of attention.

I was frozen in place, vertically positioned as usual. This time someone who looked human walked forward. He reminded me of Agent Smith from the Matrix movies, only with black hair and a head that wasn’t completely oversized for his body. His voice was different too, almost like what you would expect from a New York business man.

“You killed him, and we thank you for that. We have questions however. What did he do to you before you went to your dad’s house? What did he say to you on the...” “NO MORE!” I screamed interrupting him. “I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY OF YOU ANYMORE!” I screamed even louder. So much rage shot out of me, the loudness of my voice visibly disturbed the man before me.

I screamed again “I WILL SEE YOU ALL DIE!! DIE!!!!!!” this time around half the man’s face was torn off by my screams. Noises I had never heard came from his chest as if that was the true origin of his words.

I was released and began walking toward the man with now half a face. “I SAID DIE!!! DIE!!!! DIE!!!!” the remainder of his head exploded. Out of the darkness came aliens in their natural form. They were bigger than me but somehow I changed that. Immediately I grew, the aliens now beneath me and I screamed again as they tried to approach me from multiple sides like human animal control trying to capture a beast with rabies, “YOU WILL ALL DIE!!! I HATE YOU ALL!!! DIE!!! ALL OF YOU DIE!!!!” two more heads exploded until I was ejected from the space craft.

Free falling again, it felt so familiar, like I was having a flash back to the other time I had witness my removal from the craft, only I didn’t want to fall soundly to my bed like before. They would just come back, do more tests on me, or at the very least try to answer the questions they asked earlier, what did that boy do to me?

As I continued to plummet toward the Earth I tried numerous ways of flying, the Superman position with one fist above me toward space, the Iron Man pose with my hands hand feet pointing down as if jets were coming out of them, I even tried flapping my arms furiously, none of it worked. Finally I simply focused, I told myself I would not fall, I let go of my weight mentally & emotionally, I told myself I could travel at the speed of light. I felt energy rising up within me, I began to fall in reverse.

Seconds passed and I was back on the ship. The aliens were panicking, their screams sounded just like the boy’s did on the plane when I stabbed him. I screamed again and two more aliens died, only I quickly realized it wasn’t my

scream that was ending their lives, it was my mind. Simply focusing my rage would end them.

The more I killed, the more I remembered that boy digging around my head in the bathroom at my elementary school. I saw him, as if I was watching above my body, there was something in my head, something black that had a glow to it. I could see he was not adding something to my body, instead he was removing things, things that looked like implants the other aliens gave me.

The more I saw him working on me, the more I realized I had killed someone who was just protecting me. That's why he looked at me with shock in such a way that almost seemed like his feelings were hurt, like he just saw his own pet die right in front of him. When I planted that fork in his neck, I saw remorse.

These astral memories swelled in my mind as I slaughtered the aliens that rejected him, the aliens that boy had fought to protect me from.

I could feel many of the aliens still on board, still alive. I felt them in my chest. Killing, like everything else, gets boring after a while. My rage had died, it was too easy. They kept trying to eject me like before, but like a warm wave hitting a massive wall of pure obsidian, it had no effect against my newfound astral control.

I wanted to go home, the ship was now deep in space. I also wanted everyone on board to die, and quickly. I visualized a bomb in the center of the ship, a bomb that would consume everything within 10,000 yards, and crush it like a tin can under a cement truck. In an instant, everything around me was pulled away yet I remained in place. I could see alien heads turn into paste, I could feel walls that did not even exist before my eyes, bending and crunching. I could hear alien blood shooting out of every hole in the bodies.

Under my own will, I shot off back toward Earth, back toward my bed, back toward the hum of the furnace, to wake up tomorrow as if none of this happened.

"Good morning, good morning, good morning to you, we're happy, so happy, good morning to you." my mom sang. "Good morning mom." I said.



God of Black

The aliens haven't bothered me for years. Maybe they didn't send out a distress signal... maybe they're afraid of me. I've been keeping myself busy with my abilities. I've learned to levitate on command, I've learned to cook food with my thoughts, I can make water funnel upward and fall just by thinking about it... I can even repair injuries.

Whatever is in my head, it can change the world around it in an instant. Maybe it was growing over time. Maybe the older I get, the more the aliens fear me, which is why they tried to get to me so young.

I imagine I've been left alone all this time because I simply wanted to be. A lot of people have been doing whatever I want them to.

Julia is 18 now... and we've gone all the way many times... I never told her to do anything, but the summer that just past, the moment I desired her, she made herself available to me. She calls me when I miss her, she doesn't when I'm distracted.

No one argues with me anymore, no one questions me. My test scores in class are always passing even when I pay absolutely no attention.

It's September, a sunny day out. Being 14 I had just started High School. David was coincidentally in all the same classes as me. I had grown fond of him being around, we had a lot of long talks, he let me know all the reasons he ever did anything to distance himself from me, we even hugged.

Throughout all the orientations today, whenever I found myself getting bored, things would suddenly turn into a typical name game, some teachers even resorted

to letting us roam the halls early to get a better feel for the school on our own. This was all as I expected, exactly what I wanted.

In my last class of the day, PE, the instructor was talking about the essentials of safety. A male student with long black hair to my right raised his hand and asked the teacher “But what if we want to hurt someone?” The teacher looked back at the student and said “Why would you want to hurt anyone?” the boy looked at me, and I saw right through him. I saw his alien form, it took years, but they finally decided to pursue me again. He didn’t get a chance to reply to the teacher’s question. I knew what he was going to say. He was going to try to imply that I was a danger to the other students, he was going to try and out me.

Everyone gathered around him as he gasped for breath & fell over. The moment he looked in my eyes it was like time froze. My heart was beating so quickly, my focus was so precise I felt like my eyes could cut the air in half.

That was when I decided he should die. Moments before I severed his ability to breath, reality glowed around me. The lights, the skin of all the students, the teacher’s bald head... it was like I could see everything I needed & it all shined. In the moment my existence demanded it, I knew everything I needed to know.

I didn’t need to hide anymore. I realized nothing could hurt me. That alien underestimated me and when I was done deciding his fate, when I was done soaking in the reality of my situation, and numerous factors saturating the air, like whispers in my ear had all spoken their peace at once... I surmise no one has ever known whoever or whatever I am.

“I’m calling an ambulance!” screamed the PE teacher as the alien’s head smacked the ground repeatedly as it convulsed on the floor. His skull cracking open from his violent thrashing echoed through my head. When I realized the aliens had found me, my brain instinctively sent a vibration outward so I could sense where this creature had come from. His trail left a stench I could only sense in my mind. Thousands of miles away, a ship idled. This one was different than the last. Thinking of the one that came before, over time I grew a subtle remorse for what I did to all the creatures on the initial ship, it was somewhat nice to know that I

wouldn't be killing the innocent bystanders & families of those who came to harm me this time around.

I laid down slowly as the screams began. The alien's skin was melting away and everyone who gathered around him began to see that boy for who he really was. I'm sure after a while they would notice I was now passed out, but I planned to be back before anyone showed concern.

Flight out of your body is incredibly smooth. You can see the clouds blowing through the air but you don't feel a thing. There's no weight, no friction or any other form of resistance. The speed I traveled was selective, I was taking my time getting to the ship simply because I hadn't traveled into space since the last time they visited me. Hurrying would imply I was worried, but I knew I had plenty of time.

The moment I passed through the walls a field activated around the entire ship. I don't think they knew I would find out what was going on so quickly. They thought I was now trapped, but I wasn't going to bother proving them wrong yet, my curiosity consumed me. The aliens on board looked rough, some had significant scars, others were old & crippled.

Passing through multiple rooms on the ship I could hear their minds and vocal chords screaming. There was a kitchen, a control station, bathrooms, bedrooms, everything you would expect on a space station made by humans only in black and not quite presented in the same styles or proportions.

It was beyond obvious these creatures were not here by their own choice. My original assumption was that they were simply afraid as they had heard stories about me, but seeing their bodies, they appeared as prisoners. This species must be one to exile anyone who is imperfect.

It was odd though, I had seen these aliens repair exploded eyes before... I had seen them heal as if it was nothing before, so why were all these rooms filled with broken creatures? Unless there was a monetary system in their society, and healing came at a price...

I felt bad for them, they were terrified of me and had no will to harm me. As I arrived in the control center of the ship I could see the pilots were not piloting anything at all. It was as if this was all setup elsewhere. One of the creatures who was not horrified by my presence approached me and tried to communicate with me in their alien language.

I could feel what it felt, it was afraid of the second ship, a ship that hid behind a cloak that those on board had no idea I could detect and see right through.

I felt sympathy for this creature speaking to me. He reminded me of the special ed boy who drugged me in the bathroom all so he could remove the devices the other aliens planted in my brain to attempt stunting my abilities.

The invisible ship fired a beam towards the prisoner ship that penetrated the force field. Everyone exploded around me. My arms, my legs, my upper body... I didn't even notice it was all gone in an instant.

I felt myself floating through space, past the field the elite aliens had generated around the now decimated prisoner ship. They shot at me once more, and I felt nothing. They fired again, and I continued to advance regardless. These creatures were not stupid, they knew they were all about to die.

It took them only seconds before they attempted to evade me but before they even began to turn, the entire ship was crushed in front of my reforming eyes. As my brain grew around the the black rock, the source of who I am, and my body was restored to it's full form, I felt a sense of immortality. The world was mine, maybe one day the universe.

But I had been up here too long, time to return to class.



Goodbye Washington

I was sitting in the nurses office, I was visited by other students, some I barely knew. Lost in thoughts over what had happened beyond the comprehension of most the people who were visiting me, I came to a realization. The power I have inside me, it has turned my entire world into whatever I desire.

I am human, despite the rock in my head, all I am is another person. I have selfish thoughts, I'm designed to forward my own species, I'm programmed to do whatever it takes to survive, and now? I'm manipulating the world around me to make everyone love me, but that's wrong.

There's war, and then there's normal life. In war, you do whatever you can to continue your existence, but this perversion of reality itself, I don't want it anymore.

David was smiling across the room from me, two pretty teachers with cleavage showing stood by waiting for me to address them at the entrance of the room.

I looked at all of them, and I smiled. "Something is about to change" I said. The teacher with larger breasts than most anyone I've seen replied "What do you mean cutie?" and click... just like that, their smiles faded. Both teachers were overcome with an expression of confusion and immediately left the room.

David stood up, looked me in the eyes, lifted his finger and said "I don't know what's going on, but I haven't liked you since elementary school. Stay away from me." He then proceeded to leaving the room.

This felt better. This felt like real life.

Walking out of the nurses office, most students had already left. The busses were gone, but my mom was just pulling up outside in her car.

She hadn't smiled very much since she left Papa. He drank alcohol a lot, she didn't like his use of illegal drugs either. At one point he grabbed her and threw her against the wall, screamed at her. She finally decided to leave him, saying it was to protect us, but from what I recall, he was always nice to us.

My sisters handled the divorce relatively well, my eldest seemed to care the least. We would all have relationship problems in our future, maybe as a result of our mother leading by example, maybe because of our genetics, or maybe because this is just the way humans are.

My mother didn't talk to me much on the drive home, something had changed in her like it did everyone else. I was curious, so I chose to dive into her mind, silently sitting behind her.

There was a negative circular narrative running through her head, she couldn't get over her eyes exploding all those years ago, reasonably so. She was thinking about me, how I was the one at fault, and she seemed to want nothing to do with me despite the fact I was her own flesh and blood.

I didn't dive into her mind further than her surface thoughts. I would go back to everyone liking me, to everyone smiling when I entered the room, but that is a fiction, it is a tanning bed instead of a beach.

When I got home it was more of the same, I was a freak to my family. I was only seeing it now as I had been in denial before, and because of the mutated black core in my brain, the world denied it with me.

I was to call Julia tonight, she was expecting me. Incredibly worried, my hand shook as I lifted my phone. On the other end Julia answered almost instantly. "Hi Daniel!" she happily yelped into the phone. "Hi Julia" I replied. "I miss you so much. I've been thinking about you all day." she said genuinely.

I was so happy to hear someone still liked me. But... maybe she only liked me because she didn't know about who I was. Without hesitation I sent a wave of thoughts her way. They filled her mind and she fell into complete silence.

The abductions, the dead animals, the creatures I killed, my mother's eyes, she saw it all, I made sure of that.

"Julia?" I asked. Julie spoke softly "I... just had a... so many..." I interrupted her "It's me Julia... I can do... anything I want... and I wanted you to know who I am." Julia went silent on the other line. After another moment she asked, "You... controlled all those people?" I answered "Yes, I did. I've hurt people, I've seen and done things beyond this world..." now it was her turn to interrupt me "Did you control me? Why am I the same?" after a brief pause I said "I don't know. I'm glad you still like me though." Julia spoke up quickly again, "Come see me."

Setting down the phone, I walked over to my family sitting in the front room watching TV. We were living in a condo with two bedrooms thanks to the divorce. "I'm going to leave for a while." I said. A tear fell down my mom's face, clearly still swamped with thoughts of before. She said "You can't just leave when you want, you're 14." My middle sister added "Maybe he should leave."

Seconds later the sliding door closed behind me. I kissed my dog goodbye, and just as I did only without my body, I flew off into the air, toward Ohio, where Julia was waiting.

The trip to her took as long as I wanted it to, which was about 15 minutes. I landed outside her window, on her porch. Trying to position myself in a good lighting and pose she might think is cool, I spoke to her mind "Julia, look outside."

Julia walked up to her window in a towel as she had just gotten out of the shower. Her facial expression was priceless. She was even more amazed when a human-sized hole formed in her wall seemingly on its own.

Walking toward her, I grabbed her and kissed her. I was so much taller than her, it was perfect. She went to kiss me back, wrapping her arms around me which caused her towel to fall. I lifted her up leaving the perfect hole in her wall behind me. I laid her on her bed. The next hour of my life was spent doing everything I wanted to do, and I knew what she wanted fell in perfect line without any influence.

A bullet passed through my neck and into her forehead.



Playing God

She was dead. I stared at her as the life left her eyes. I didn't see a red glow, I saw a diverse explosion of light before me, her essence, her energy, leaving her body. Julia had been shot through the neck, bled out & all I did was stare.

The man who shot her, he was wearing a funny costume, he must have thought very highly of himself. I should have known he was behind me, I should have known he was peering through the skylight above us, carefully aiming his weapon to do what he no doubt thought would kill me. I knew why he was here. I could read everything about the situation I found myself in to the smallest detail.

He was hired by a person who was hired by another person who was sent to employ an assassin, an assassin such as him. Those creatures that took me on their ship, the ones that tested on me, tried to defeat my black stone, they really thought that if they sent someone after me, who wasn't like them, I wouldn't retaliate.

Time for punishment.

The assassin was pinned against the wall, blood leaking from his ears to match his polkadot suit, red and black, ridiculous. Julia's soul moved in the slowest of motion, almost as if she was sticking around to look into her own eyes, to see her own dead body just like you hear in all those stories. We love looking at ourselves as we leave. Almost like one final goodbye.

There were creatures all over Earth just like the ones who took me. Only these ones hid in human skin, it was time for there to be none.

My body collapsed as I ejected out of it. Time froze again. I imagined a beam of energy coming out the back of my neck, my spine, my tailbone and feet. I for-

ward thrust through the wall, shooting across highways, through wooded areas and across the ocean I traveled to every green light I could see & feel for thousands of miles. The green light I programmed or otherwise designated in my mind to signify the visitors. All I would have to do is get close enough to see their face for them to die. I could have simply imagined them perish from across the planet, but I wanted to see, I wanted to be close, I wanted to experience their death with my own presence.

There were creatures in the bodies of children, their adopted mother's screamed at the loss of them, some of them had fathers who cried, some of them had no fathers at all. Other creatures were business men, in fact most of them were. I pulled some of them out of buildings, I drown some in their own bath tubs, the rest I simply separated head from body.

If it occurred in real time, their deaths took me seventeen hours and forty seven minutes to accomplish, however this was in the other realm of existence, thus, I was back before the assassin could let out his second scream of pain from my intentional tightening of pressure around his entire body.

I wanted my body upright by the time I got back, and there I was, standing lifeless next to Julia in our blood soaked bed, waiting for my soul to return.

As I phased through the wall, I walked into my body and lurched toward the man on the wall, holding his throat, feeling his pulse blink down my arm.

I spoke to him "I want you to see how pointless what you have done is." He looked at me with a smile in his eyes showing his teeth in a half grin on his face as blood seeped out of his mouth, he gurgled "I don't fear you!" I replied "Julia?" The man looked at me trying to hold back his confusion, masking it with false confidence.

Julia sat up in bed. The light her soul filled the room with was gone. Without much thought I had returned her to this world and had given her all the information she needed to know.

Julia blinked a few times and looked at me holding the man against the wall with blurry eyes. “You’re naked” she said. I replied “And it’s not just your blood that I’m drenched in darling.”

“WHAT IS THIS!?” the assassin screamed. I replied “I just wanted you to see that you accomplished nothing, and your employers are dead.” A look of desperation crossed his eyes as the walls melted behind him.

I didn’t want to kill him, to be brutally honest, I only want to kill what I fear. The creatures from another world, they had the means to kill me, I knew I would have to commit further genocide against them to truly protect myself, but this human? All humans? There was nothing for them to do but kneel.

As the man passed through the walls, soaring hundreds of miles from me at thousands of miles per hour, I made sure he stayed alive, and that he landed in a swamp near nothing familiar to him.

I spared this man, but left him broken. If he lived at this point, that would be up to him.

As the walls reformed, as the blood evaporated into nothing, as the floor cleaned itself and the furniture we broke reassembled, as the bullet hole in the glass above us closed, as the sheets on the bed made themselves, Julia spoke to me, “What can you not do?” I replied quickly “Lose you.” She laughed “Smooth Daniel.” I continued “There’s no need for us to talk anymore, walk to me.” I lifted my hand and Julia walked forward to press her forehead against it.

With Julia breathing softly as my skin warmed hers, I formed a new stone, it grew in the center of her mind and glowed of another color, blue. Tears poured from Julia’s eyes as she whimpered “What is this?” I replied in her mind, silently. She looked up at me as I dropped my hand and listened to the words I spoke within the walls behind her eyes “Now I cannot lose you, ever.”

As Julia realized I had made her invulnerable to harm, she smiled in a manner that seemed scared, sad & hopeful all at once. I grabbed Julia’s hand, gazed deeply into her, and guided her back to the bed, to finish what we had started.

The next morning we disappeared together, spending most of our days in the woods, talking to each other in silence about everything we could. The majority of our conversation revolved around our love for each other. I above all realized love was a product of biology, a design to encourage us to reproduce, but it was something I treasured and chose not to remove from either of us.

Julia would have our child one day, she insisted to me and I felt her desire. But another desire existed. There were people around the world, just like her, people if I had met instead of her, I could have cared for in a similar way. There were innocent people, there were lost children & I was doing nothing for any of them despite being given all the power I could have.

Society was like a book full of images saturated with gore and chaos. I could stomach the cover, but the moment I tried to open a single page, I felt defeated, hopeless.

However I remain a teenager, while I can take actions to preserve my own existence and that of those I love, I didn't know where to begin when it came to the order of society. I have no idea how to decide who lives and who dies when they are not an active threat to anyone.

And that was it, I decided that to truly justify taking human life, they had to be an active threat to another human life. I had to allow the world to continue mostly unaltered, but save enough people to make a significant difference overall.

We were sitting outside a cabin, looking on a massive private lake. We didn't belong there, it was not ours, but there was not much to say anything belonged to anyone. The cabin was abandoned for years. My thoughts of my place in the world plagued me just like most any human. What was my purpose?

"So you're just going to play hero?" Julia spoke for the first time in weeks with her own voice. I replied "Why speak aloud?" She answered "It's fun sometimes, but... I donno, seems like no matter what you do, the world will just keep being this way. You have the ability to change it all, but you don't know if a world without darkness would really be living. So you have a choice to either end it all, let all the shadows fade, or..." I cut her off. "I... can reprogram it all." She responded "Lobotomize everyone?" I sat there silently.

“No more mental illness. I’m going to cure everyone.” I said. She replied “So, no more therapy, no more medication or disorders for anyone?” I smiled and said “I don’t know of anyone who wants to be damaged.” She added “Is being damaged what makes us, us?” I was at a loss.

I had a loaded gun without a trigger.

After extensive thought, I decided to change the world in a way that would allow everyone to remain themselves, only the consequences for our actions shifted. I ripped a hole in the reality standing before me. I looked into the design of it all, and got to work manipulating the skeleton of our society. I strengthened potential victims of crimes. I designed defense mechanisms, enhanced aspects of the human body to strike back in a natural yet bold manner.

Fingernails became as strong as steel, there no longer an imbalance between the genders, children were given the natural inclination to know the locations of their parents and visa versa so they could never be lost or abducted effectively.

I treated the world like lines of code in a video game, changing hit points, stamina, strength, I redesigned our species. I would say evolution was failing us, and I was the correction, however I was a product of evolution.

The time to return to the society I had transformed had come.



Homecoming

I found myself floating, soft clouds touched my skin but I couldn't feel a thing. Julia said "I'm so cold Daniel." as she held my hand, floating thousands of feet above the ground right next to me. I replied "How about now?" she smiled quickly "It's gone, completely." I smiled with her. I asked, "Where do you want to go?" Julia replied "Anywhere really, we should visit my home at some point." My ability to make her comfortable, to change her physical body so she could feel whatever she desired, to make her dreams come true, her happiness was mine.

Without hesitation I flew us toward Julia's house. Initially Julia's body kind of dangled behind mine as she had no ability to keep up as I soared through the air, flying hundreds of miles per hour was not simple, even with the ability I gave her. There were a couple points where Julia's pants fell down but I simply fabricated new ones. At one point she said "If you can just make them with your mind, why not make pants that don't fall when we fly?" I laughed.

Julia's parents weren't too fond of me. I snatched their daughter away without notice or any hint of our destination, the unannounced return couldn't possibly be received well. Landing softly in her driveway, Julia immediately pulled her shoe lace out of her shoe and tied it around her waste. I smirked and asked "How are you going to keep your shoes on when we fly?" she replied quickly "We're not flyi..." interrupting Julia, an axe flew past my shoulder smacking the ground a number of feet behind me. A scream sounded off from Julia's house. It was her father with his wrinkled up face and angry eyebrows, he yelled "You're a dead man! Where's my daughter!?" he stomped out and immediately lost his footing when Julia yelled "Hello daddy!" The man tripped to his knees right in front of me. He

was incredibly choked up and ran over to her, hugging her and saying all the things dad's say when magical boys fly their daughters to far away places and without warning and later randomly return them.

After realizing his daughter was in on running away for a while and that no one was tricked her father into losing an unwilling daughter, he welcomed me in his house. He didn't apologize for throwing an axe at me, but you could see the apology in his forehead wrinkles when he changed his tone.

Julia's mother was equally happy to see her daughter, although fortunately for me, she saw her daughter first before recognizing that I was in the room, I'm sure I would have been maced which I likely would feel for at least a second before re-programming that aspect of my body as well.

There was cornbread cooking in the oven, a noodle dish in the rack above with a salad and raspberry lemonade to help flush it all down. At dinner Julia's father had a lot to say about the changes I made to the world, not knowing I played any part in it. He spouted out "So women have teeth on their crotches now aye Daniel?" In the middle of drinking my lemonade I tried to swallow without a hiccup. Clearing my throat I replied "Yes, I thought that would make sense." Her dad looked concerned, "What do you mean?" I replied sincerely "I mean, men have their swords, women should have their blades too right?" Julia's father gave me a sarcastic look "Oh, you're one of those." I giggled slightly and said "One of..." and quickly went silent mid sentence. In that moment I saw into his mind, without even inquiring I saw all the women he hurt, he had even attacked Julia's friends when she was younger. He was a serial predator and the moment I realized what he was he dropped dead, face falling flat in his noodles.

As Julia's mother screamed in horror, I sat there, frozen, angry with myself, angry with society, angry with the world that was still broken. I changed the future, but the people from the past, they all remained regardless of the things they had done. Snapping out of my thoughts I saw Julia staring at me, tears running down her face, eyes turning red with a mixture of sadness and anger. She saw everything about her father I had just seen, she invaded my mind as soon as she realized I was

not reacting to her father's death whatsoever. She projected her thoughts into my head seconds after I made eye contact with her.

Julia did not want me there. She understood why I did what I did, but she also just lost her father, and couldn't process everything with me around. Upon realizing I was not welcome, using the black rock in my skull, I materialized a dark coffin, one any family would be proud of. Seconds passed and the coffin was complete so I dropped it in the middle of their front room. Inside the coffin I left enough money to more than compensate the household for the loss of its primary breadwinner.

Her mother screamed again only this time with a coherent command "Call an ambulance! God! I can't find my phone! Call now!" and I replied "They're on their way." however I did not use a phone, I simply sent a signal to the brains of the closest medics, but I knew it would not help. I was simply doing it for the mother, she did not need to know the truth about any of this, such information could cause a person who dedicated their whole life to a fraud to fall into a deep depression, possibly leading to them taking their own life. It was tragic enough already that even his daughter had to know the truth about her father.

Walking out the front door, I spoke to Julia's mind "I'm sorry. I'll return when you call for me." but when my words hit her mind, it was like a car falling in water. First an impact, apparent rejection, followed by a slow sinking, and absorption of everything that made contact.

Overwhelmed with emotion I sprinted through the trees, the bushes, even fences breaking everything in my path. My shoes would fall apart only to be reformed again and again. I would simply design clothing for myself using the universe's code that would result in no deterioration of anything I wore despite the stress I subjected it to, but my clothes helped me keep track of how much damage I would be enduring if I was something even remotely close to human anymore.

The more I ran, the more I realized I didn't know where I even wanted to go. All I could think about was Julia, back at her house, with her mother, locked in sorrow. Without thinking about it I stopped mid step, landing in the middle of a lake. I sank, so distracted in my thoughts that I didn't bother to fight it. I couldn't see

anything underwater, I didn't like that feeling so I made it clear & pure. I could see for hundreds of feet now, so many things cast aside, boots, boats & endless trash.

Thinking about Julia, in the cold depths of the water I felt warmth. I was becoming hopeless, and I knew I could change that in an instant but to do so would be to lose meaning, to become someone who truly has nothing to lose, and no one to love.

Hours past as I thought about where I should go, what the point would even be of me going anywhere & I decided I wanted to return to the life I knew. My curiosity and sense of obligation to my family seemed to be my only remaining ties to my identity. I needed to return to my home.

Landing in my mom's rock and dirt yard behind her condo, I walked in the sliding door, the locks opened for me without much consideration. No door was truly closed to me. "Mom, Joanna!" I yelled. Life would be easier for me if I simply programmed them where to be and when, but that would take away the whole purpose of my life. I didn't want to bring myself back to the abomination I found myself living in while recovering in the nurses office.

My sister yelled out "Daniel!" and ran up to hug me. "Hey!" I said as she hugged me. I added "Mom isn't home?" and before she could answer I already had all the info I needed. She replied "She..." but I put up my finger to silence her as I essentially I had already downloaded everything I missed. I said "So mom has been dating around, no luck yet hmm?" Joanna replied "So you're still a freak, cool."

That night my sister and I played video games, or at least tried, she quit shortly after saying she was bored. It was typical among siblings, both wanting to hangout with the idea of their brother or sister, neither wanting to hang out with the actual person who was their brother or sister.

My mom returned late that night. She was partially drunk when she saw me, but sober enough to know who I was and that I was gone for some time. Staring at me for only a moment as she came through the door, without a word she walked off to her room. My mom still hadn't gotten over her eyes and what I did to them, she hadn't gotten over anything I had done.

I left the condo immediately after, I have always hated being where I'm unwanted, if people are better off without me, then I am better off gone. My next destination was where I spent most my childhood, the creek, the small square house, the abduction site. Landing in the middle of my old yard I could see my mom's house still had not sold. It was a problem I could fix, in an instant the documents signed themselves for the sale of the house, the money transferred itself and just like that, it all belonged to me.

Before walking into the moonlit wood home, I noticed a red glow coming from the creek. The quiet hum of death filled my ears, I could feel the other side calling me, curiosity consumed my mind. In the morning I would begin digging up the bodies but tonight I would lay on my foam mattress, next to the raging furnace, alone in my tiny old room in my tiny old house.



Golden Man

I woke up alone to the sound of birds chirping outside. I could hear the water from the creek. If I wanted to I could even hear my grandmother's breathing next door if I really tried. I could also feel the radiant glow of death lining our creek bed.

It was time to lose myself, my world, I was losing my hunger, losing my urges, growing beyond whatever I was before, day by day. I'm not sure I even cared.

Walking out to the creek, the sun beamed down on my pale skin. I squinted only to wonder why, all I had to do was reprogram my eye's tolerance for light. And like that, it was done. I could see everything, eyes wide open. I slipped my bare feet into the water, then I slipped my feet further into the rocks, the dirt, and shortly after my knees followed, then my hips & my chest. I was fully submerged in the ground, moving freely.

Everyone else had to respect the physical world, they had to adhere to the laws of it, not upset it or disturb it for risk of repercussions, but I had yet to meet a physical mass I could not pass through.

As I sank my head under the water, through the mud, with my mind I made the dirt clear, just as I had the water at the lake prior. I could see all the bodies hidden and misplaced. There were women down here, I counted 14 within a mile's radius. I would walk inside the Earth, and come across bones seemingly every hundred yards. Reaching through the dirt, liquified to my touch, I felt the bones of each person, they were all put here by the same man. Gary.

Most these women were previously working at strip clubs, paid to leave with the man, never to see their family or friends again. I rose above the dirt and water, planting my feet on the rocks in the creek bed as if I were normal for a moment.

I heard a familiar voice call out “Daniel! What are you doing!? You’re soaking!” it was my Grandma, I had found myself in front of her house on my hunt for the victims of Gary.

I shook my head and as the water shot off in all directions my hair extended outward doubling in length. My hair turned from brown to golden blonde and my skin heated till the water steamed off it, leaving me dry, still holding a piece of a woman’s leg in my hand. My hair was so bright now and flowed to my shoulders, by why?

My grandma was speechless in seeing my transformation, I had no idea what would cause me to suddenly change like this, I simply desired to be as warm and dry as my comfort would see fit. But this change, this physical alteration, it felt right.

As I lifted off the ground, I could see tears falling from my grandma’s eyes. She was always religious and probably felt I was blessed by her god. Unfortunately for me I could not detect any gods, I could not see anything in the universe but common creatures. I was capable of so much, but I would be foolish to assume I was the most powerful being out there.

I soared through the air waiting for Gary’s energy to reach out like a hand to guide me. As my legs trailed behind me, they grew, my arms began to bulge pressing against my white button up shirt, hairs pushed out of my arms and legs and distracted by this fact I let myself fall from the air.

Landing shoulder first in a Christmas Tree crop I groaned even more confused about what was happening to me. I felt no pain, I was simply lost and concerned for what had taken over me. I was so used to being in control. I wanted to see my face but couldn’t as I was still in my own body and had no reflection to look upon, everything else was changing. I needed a better look at myself and there was a simple solution. My soul shot out of my body without hesitation and I was immedi-

ately able to see a man with blue eyes, broad shoulders, at least six feet tall standing there, he looked like he was in his late 20's, almost double my age.

I looked down at my soul, to my surprise my body mirrored the man I just jumped out of, I had changed on every level without touching a line of code. Moving back into my body I reminded myself of my agenda. I didn't want to waste time on my identity crisis while Gary was still out there.

As I searched for Gary's energy standing in the field, I found myself humbled by fate. I was already within five hundred feet of him, this field was his property. He was the person who ran the Christmas Tree farm.

Without a moment's hesitation, his throat was in my hand. I had split a line of his trees ripping them up from the roots, destroying half of his house as my body slammed through it just to hold his neck in my right hand.

I didn't want to dive into his mind, I didn't want to see what he had seen, I just wanted to know one thing. Gary gasped for air so I released him and altered his body to have no response to gravity. He was helpless floating in his own house, as I finished coding his body to suffer from paralysis in his weightless state, I asked him "Why?" Gary was still able to move his mouth, and he used it to scream "Who are you!? What's going on!?" I screamed back "Why did you kill those women!" he yelled back "You're the devil! You're here to claim my soul!? It took you long enough you monster!"

His jaw was ripped off with my thoughts alone. As his tongue flung out and slapped against his chest I removed his arms, legs and all the bones in his torso.

His screams sounded like the countless women he tortured and killed finding peace, they sounded like justice. The world didn't need him in it, in a mere breath's time he ceased to exist as anything but ash on the floor of his half demolished house.

Gary was gone however on his walls he had pictures of all his friends, men who looked just like him, mirroring his stretched out plaid shirts and jeans far too small for his body. Looking at the photo I planted their faces in my mind and closed my eyes, there were seven men total who had collaborated with Gary. They didn't kill

the women, but they knew what he did, and covered for him every chance they could. Providing burial locations, overwatch assistance and even transportation. Five of the men I simply called for them to cease to exist and in an instant I felt an absence of their presence on Earth. The last two I wanted to see personally, I wanted an answer to my question.

The first of the two men was named Raymond, he tried to meet me with a shotgun, unfortunately for him it had no effect considering the alterations I made the instant he lifted it to me in his drive way. The moment he pulled the trigger the butt of his gun exploded into pieces, shooting into Raymond's eyes. He fell screaming to the gravel rocks beneath my feet. I dove into his mind and saw Gary, I saw Raymond helping Gary load the bodies and before I could even finish that thought Raymond was gone. Burned in the rage I felt when I saw him lifting those girls one by one. Some drugged, some dead, destined to be buried and hidden from anyone who could help, with the exception of me.

"What have you done! Where did Raymond go!" an older female cried out having witnessed Raymond fall. In a glance I sent the woman the same images I just witnessed and without a single word from me the woman began screaming in agony. Only generic predictable words came from her mind "Raymond how could you! Why Raymond!" I heard her repeat this over and over as she cried in her drive way. Her sound of sorrow trailed behind me as I flew towards the last person involved, Joseph.

Joseph was sitting on his porch, he was using a breathing assistance device. Joseph had let his body go since meeting Gary. Right away I knew he had been trying to eat himself to death the moment he learned of the first girl. It was clear to me Joseph would talk, so I walked up to him and asked "Why did Gary kill all those women? Why did you help him?" Joseph began crying, I could see all the things he had done to help Gary get away with murder, but I could also see his face ever second he was involved. He wasn't angry, he wasn't disgusted, all he was, was sad. I spoke to Joseph "He killed your wife. He killed her before he ever made the deal with you." Joseph screamed at me "He said she was alive! He said he'd give her back!" following his words with sobbing and incoherent groans.

Most anyone could do nothing for this man, I could also choose to do nothing, but instead I sought out the soul of his wife and lured her to my side. As she stood beside me I gave Joseph the ability to see her. In the world of the dead, she was happy, she was warm & comfortable. The moment Joseph saw this his tears of pain turned to tears of joy.

In that moment I stopped his heart. As his body slumped forward, a much thinner man stood up and walked out of him. Joseph was whole again, everyone who hurt those women was now dead. Although unlike the other men, Joseph's soul remained intact. I began to fly home leaving Joseph and his wife in each others arms. In my attempts to leave I felt a strong beam pull me off course. I could see it as yellow in color and any resistance I tried to apply made me feel like a fly with it's wings stuck to tape, as if getting away would force me to leave piece of myself behind. This force was stronger than any alien beam I had felt before.

For the first time since gaining my abilities, I found myself completely helpless.



God

I felt like I was covered in slime, laying on the ground, staring at a distant white light. The ground was hard, cold like ice, hairline cracks I could barely sense ran through the white and black veinous surface that seemed to stretch on for miles into the blackness that surrounded me.

“You’re not as powerful as you think Daniel.” a voice came from the white glowing light above me. Looking up I called back “I didn’t ask for any of this! I don’t care about any of this!” the voice shouted back “Don’t waste my time Daniel.” and with a thunderous boom the light shot forward and smacked against the ground in front of me.

I wanted to see what was beneath the light so I altered my eyes to cut through whatever cloak this creature was putting up. Immediately time slowed in accordance with my will and a skull riddled with decay was revealed beyond the light. The lower jaw of the skull was missing and the spine of this creature was being held together by screws and metal bars.

My vision went to white, then black as the creature impacted the rock floor we stood upon. I corrected my eyes again to see a man standing before me with an aura that glowed yellow. His eyes shined blue and he wore a black and white striped suit, only this suit seemed to have no ends, like it just faded into his bones.

He spoke again “I am an angel, and you are disrupting the order of our world.” I replied immediately, “You are no angel. You are death. I saw your rotting bones and what you are showing me now is a lie.” The creature stomped on the ground furiously and screamed “What? How could you possibly! What are you!?”

and shot his hand up in the air, clicking his fingers together. The healthy looking man he was projected flickered to his bone form as he clicked. Silence fell on the room as his jawless face turned to me. I felt it smile even though the bones before me remained still. Upon the second echo of his clicked fingers bouncing through the black room I felt my chest explode. My spine ripped out my back as my heart shot forward.

My face turned to joy as my blonde hair thrust backward, I could only hope that this creature was going to lead me to the answers I craved. My upper body separated from the bottom and my head smacked against the ground. My blood flew in all directions, even splattering against the creature dead stare.

The reaper silently walked toward my upper body and bent over to look into my eyes. I mouthed words silently to him. I felt the confusion of the reaper, he had no idea what I was trying to say. Laughter erupted through me causing blood to shoot out of my mouth onto his skull again.

I could read the mind of the reaper now, I saw every life he took, every person he robbed of this world before their time and in the most unforgivable ways. He watched groups of orphan children burn, he danced to the cries of women being invaded, violated and murdered by forces from other countries. The order I was disrupting was not made up, there was in fact an order, and this reaper designed the order to be merciless and indiscriminate.

I wanted this reaper, Death itself to understand what I was saying in my mangled state on the floor, so I altered the code to rattle his head with the sound of my amplified voice. The words I mouthed were "Say goodbye to control." As the creature shook and screamed at the echos of my voice exploding through his mind, he yelled back "I am in control! I am Death!"

Altering the code, I surrounded the creature and his screams with a gray material I designed myself in a matter seconds. I created it to contain any force, including Death itself. I bound the creature controlling the mass with my mind and as the gray material fully enclosed around this reaper, I crushed him to the size of a child's marble.

Still laying on the floor in pieces the black rock in my head shot out of my defeated body and formed a new shell around it. I liked the body of the man that was thrust onto me before and kept his form.

Walking over to the marble now rolling around on the floor I picked it up and held it in front of my face. I could still feel the energy of the creature inside, unfortunately for the creature however, it could not process thought with its' new condition. I had converted the existence of Death into a crippled and impotent state.

I had to alter the code of reality again, to extract the origin of this reaper from a state of compression that didn't exist before. As I scanned the data before me I found the source of Death. It aligned closely with what most humans considered God. But in the code I also saw a truth many had never imagined. God was not the source of all things, God was just another son. He created evil like Death because he was evil himself. The Devil never really existed as people had believed for so long, the Devil was just an aspect of God's divided personality, like anyone's father when he is in his worst mood.

Every crime, every tear that fell, it was caused by God. He created Death, he created our suffering, and he sent the Reaper to end me. The code before my eyes revealed God's face, and the expression he had when he sent Death to me, he was not too busy to handle this himself, he was just afraid.

Diving deeper into the code I could see God's father, a man by the name of Kull. Kull was unlike God in that God was flesh through and through. Kull however had no flesh in his skull whatsoever, it was composed of a substance most any human would perceive as gas and dust.

I searched the code for God's location however three different locations came back to me. Without hesitation I lifted my arm directing my energy to my former body, laying there, split in two on the floor. My former flesh united again, my skull filled with light and closed to become whole again.

I spoke to the old body as a new stone formed within it's heart. "You are everything I am not, you are compassionate where I am cruel, you are true where I am lost, but you are programmed just like everything else on this Earth." the body

spoke back in a soft and strong voice “I am here to serve you, I feel everything you are.”

Without further instruction The Body shot through the seemingly endless black above us and ripped a hole as his body shot through the limits of the illusion Death had surrounded us in.

The Body looked down on me as the walls of black flowed down to the ground miles all around me like curtains being ripped from the windows in slow motion. The Body’s hair floated before the now exposed sun, he smiled on me as a tear slide down his face. I flinched my eyes at him and his smile faded, within a blink he was gone to confront one of the God locations.

Now seeing the fabric walls fade around me I could see I was very near where I was hit with the beam of energy earlier. My chains were lifted, I could feel my freedom again.

The second and third God locations would be up to me. Picking one I launched off the ground cratering the rock left in my wake. As I flew at a blinding speed, I called for Julie to meet me miles outside my destination. She arrived seconds after I did.

Julia walked toward me with a concerned expression. She knew who I was, she was already in my mind. “I think you might be too old for me now Daniel.” she said with a smirk, observing my new appearance. I laughed and grabbed her by the throat. Light illuminated under my palm on her neck as she dove into my thoughts once more.

I could feel Julia let herself get overtaken by fear. She spoke in my mind “You want me to kill God!?” I spoke aloud in response “I just put everything you need in your body. It’ll attach to you in a way that cannot be separated by anything but me.” Julie looked down at the ground as I released her throat. She began to cry. I could see I was out of line asking so much of her. She had the tools now, but not the will.

I spoke again “I’ve asked too much. This is my dysfunctional way of spending time with you, but clearly I didn’t think about you before thinking of myself.” Julie

looked up and said again in my mind “Anything less screwed up I can do for you Daniel?” as she wiped away her tears from the stress I caused her. I held out my hand upside down and clenched. She reached out hers. A marble hit her palm.

Julie looked up at me concerned. I spoke aloud again “That is the grim reaper. He is frozen in there, and cannot escape. Hold onto him for me will you?” Julie began to say something back but couldn’t finish her thought. I was already gone.

The Body had already concluded the first God location, I wanted to beat him to the others.



The Hand of God

In an instant I was already where I needed to be. Location coding is rather simple, I just didn't want to take my time traveling. I now stood behind a man who looked like what most anyone would imagine God to be. A white silhouette that flickered black to white stood before me, a massive yellowish-gold light beamed from around him, I felt him watching me despite the appearance that he was not even facing me.

There was no delay, energy shot out of the God figure and I immediately felt the rock in my head begin to take the blunt of his attack. The Body instantaneously appeared, slamming into God in a body five times larger than he had before.

It was too late to stop God from damaging my core existence. The attack he had jolted my head with... I was so underprepared.

Collapsing on the white and yellow slabs of stone I found God's half standing on, my vision blurred and I felt like I had to vomit while simultaneously getting the sensation that black hole within my head was sucking my mind into itself.

I heard a scream like I had never heard before. It wasn't coming from The Body. I looked up with my failing eyes and saw God's hand explode into bloody shards for everyone to see. He had attempted to strike The Body down, yet his violence turned on him ten fold without any reaction from The Body.

I could see God wielding a sword in his remaining hand as he reformed the other. He took a clear swing at The Body, attempting to decapitate my creation.

As the blade approached The Body's head, God slowed until coming to a complete state of standing paralysis. His hand remained half formed, his aura flick-

ered like a light bulb in it's last minutes. His whole body, now frozen in place as if his muscles had become cement.

It was clear The Body had defeated the second half of God. As I felt relief, I allowed myself to collapse completely, yet I remained conscious.

I could see The Body walking over to me, his thoughts, I could not feel them anymore, I could not communicate with him or even sense his presence in the way I was used to. In his warm giant arms, I felt myself lifted. I dangled there like a child who had just fallen from his bike.

As The Body walked away from the second God Half, I looked back and saw the frozen man begin to crumble into shards of stone, then into dust till eventually he was nothing.

The Body placed his hand over my eyes as I felt blood from my skull seep out of my forehead trickling down into my ears as I remained limp in his arms. I heard popping noises, and I felt my bones being pulled out of my brain where the second God had crushed them in to me.

With only minutes passed I was fully healed again. The Body had taken me to a wooded area far from where the last God fell. Placing me to a standing position, The Body spoke. "The first God was very informative." I quickly replied "Yes, clearly you learned some deal, you handled the second like he was nothing. But..." The Body interrupted me, "The reason you can't read my mind, the reason you can't even sense me is because to defeat the first God I had to operate in an entirely different universe of code."

For once in a long time I was completely lost. I replied, "Go on." The body nodded to me and continued "This world, everything we know here, it operates in on system, one program. Everything on this world is accessible by you & me... but it is also accessible by the Gods."

I began to understand what The Body was talking about. He was going to tell me that he had found a way to prevent the Gods from altering his code. The Body interrupted my thoughts "What you're thinking is somewhat true, but in reality, I don't even operate off code anymore. I am no longer a prisoner to programming."

Just like that I was completely lost again. The Body continued, “There is a realm of existence beyond our own, beyond the universe, beyond all we know. To put it simply, humans are to computers, as I now am to humans. My existence is far more complicated than the comparatively simple lines of code you designed me with.”

I looked at the ground, feeling humbled. I replied “So... what you’re saying is no one here can stop you? The last God will not be challenge whatsoever no matter how strong he is.” The Body smiled and replied, only this time he spoke directly to my mind, sharing exactly what I needed to do to become like him. I immediately took advantage of the information he provided. Within seconds I felt like my whole mind was being pulled into quicksand and slowly after it, the reminder of my entire existence, my body, everything.

Dropping to my knees I grunted and struck the ground as if someone had knocked the wind out of me. After the initial shock, my lost sense of The Body returned. I also could feel the last of the three Gods stronger than before. I could feel the presence of Julie, as if she was right in front of me. I knew exactly where David was, where all of my teachers from school were, I knew the location of everyone and everything as if they were all a short reach away.

So many things seemed unlike they were before, instead of having to search for codes within the universe to answer whatever questions I had, I now only had to look within my own mind.

I looked into The Body’s mind to see how the first God had been defeated. I was bombarded with images of The Body nearly dying, I saw the first God attempt to cut off The Body’s head just like the second had, only the first God was successful. Witnessing the images of The Body appearing dead, I could see him now standing physically in front of me, with eyes of sadness. Diving back into the past, more images flooded in.

The Body had done what I had done. “I learned from you” The Body spoke up, interrupting my observation of what had happened. I gave The Body the ability to do most anything I could do, and in that he too created a replacement for himself, only while forming the new body, he multiplied its size and shifted his pro-

gramming into a form the first God could not comprehend, and therefore, could not alter or impact in any significant way.

As the first God sliced every part of the original form of The Body into pieces, his new shell was forming behind the unwitting deity. The first God could not detect The Body, just like I could not, and without delay, the far larger form of The Body crushed the first God half into sludge. The Body then altered the second God's code to become divided so thinly, that he could be blown away as meaningless fragments of trash in the wind.

Before I could finish full absorption of all the information The Body was already up to something new. With a mere thought he had delivered the last God to us, already paralyzed but clearly very much so awake. Standing before us, the last God was paralyzed not just by the power of The Body, but also frozen in his own terror.

The Body allowed God to speak. "You are punishing me aren't you? Haven't you done enough!?" God shouted. I looked at The Body cueing him to speak for me. The Body smiled slightly, feeling honored his creator wanted him to speak to God in his place, but I knew The Body was well aware that I remained humble, as he had evolved faster than even me.

The Body spoke "You invented everything wrong with this world. Countless humans and other animals have been slaughtered under your watch, children dying of cancer, mothers crying as their half formed children fall from their bodies, innocent people drowning in your floods, burning in your fires, tell me God, does the Devil really even exist? Because I can't sense him anywhere." God laughed and The Body interrupted his laughter "It was a rhetorical question God. I'm well aware there is no Devil, I'm well aware if there was a Devil, he would have been one of the first God halves I already killed. I'm well aware that you are a failure of your father Kull, and I know that this world wasn't even your creation, but rather a creation of the sister you murdered, the daughter of Kull. And you took her life right before the first genocide you committed, against her creations."

God screamed as spit poured out his mouth "How can you possibly know that!? Your the creation of a boy in a man's body, you've existed for only days and you

can just tell me who I am? My sister was scum, she was everything my father wanted and my father is scum too!”

As I watched The Body continue to scold God, I could see what The Body was seeing. God not only killed his sister, he also violated her body. He killed her in his own shame as a result of what he did to her. He was jealous of his father’s love for his sister, and he wanted to do everything he could to claim the power his sister wielded. He wanted to ruin her, and out of jealousy, he did every horrible thing he could to her before ending her very existence.

I interrupted The Body. “God, Kane vs Able, Lucifer vs Humans. Those are stories of you, confessing what you did but simply placing names on made up people to take the blame instead of you. It wasn’t Lucifer who wanted to torment humanity, it wasn’t Lucifer who was jealous of how much Humans were loved. It was you. It wasn’t Kane who resented Able, that too was a projection of yourself, a sad man who wanted everything his sister had.” God was glaring directly into my eyes at this point. No energy came from them, no threats, no fight in him at all. He was shamed, he was defeated, and looking into his eyes, with only a thought, I turned his bones into ash. His skin, his muscles, flowed to the ground like a puff of steam sliming up the floor, eventually becoming unnoticable.

Looking up at The Body I asked, “Do you know anything about Kull that I do not?” The Body replied, “I know you think I might have the ability to hide something from you, but I gave that up when I made you like me. I did this because you hid nothing from me, so I cannot do any less for you.”

I looked at the ground, where God once stood. I spoke under my breath “So those who God drowned in the flood, they were actually the original creations of his sister. They were perfect versions of us, and God thought he could do better. Yet God wound up making so many of us just like him... so my question is...” The Body spoke back “Why did Kull willingly create a monster like God?”

CHAPTER 22

THE MOTHER OF A BETTER WORLD

All around the world, I could hear people screaming. I could see them being violated, robbed, beaten & broken down in every way. They were made in the corrupt God's image. Some represented his good side, others were the embodiment of his evil. I grew tired of the sound of suffering as I not only could feel their pain as they felt it, but it distracted me from Kull, from finding the answers not even I could provide with all my knowledge and power.

I had improved the world when I gained full realization of my ability, but that didn't stop nature from taking its course. I created The Body to be my better half, to stand when I could not, and now I had a great task for him.

The Body stood next to me, waiting for me to vocalize a decision for our next actions. I knew The Body could hear the screams as well, I knew he could hear my thoughts and my focus on the

pain of the world. I spoke "I need you to..." in the middle of my sentence, The Body disappeared.

He knew I wanted him to be better than God, to be better than The Reaper and to reverse the destruction God caused when he killed his own sister. First that would require The Body gaining knowledge of how the world truly was before God. To analyze the code and see what was changed when God wiped out all of his sister's children and made poor corrupted imitations of them.

While my creation could focus on the issues of the world, I could focus on Kull. Unfortunately for me, Kull was a god of gods. You would assume to locate someone at the absolute height of the universe's hierarchy would be difficult, but in fact, chronology was my first strategy to locate him, and the strategy was effective.

As usual I had opened a black rip in reality, so I could effectively scan through the data of the universe, the code. I searched back to God's initial code creation, the first time it existed in all of existence. God was in fact not only created second, but at the apparent request of his sister. She wanted a brother, someone to guide & inspire with

her creations, however Kull did not code God properly. Kull made many mistakes with his daughter's much younger brother.

To give description to the timeline of Kull's creation to God's creation would be best explained through comparison. The dinosaurs were a creation of Kull. I could see this in the signature and coding style of Kull. The explanation for their extinction from what I could understand appeared to be unintentional. The more I analyzed Kull's coding, the more I realized he was nowhere near as thorough as his daughter.

Millions of years after the dinosaurs came humans, just like God came after Kull, only in a time frame of trillions. The more I compared God's code, to his sisters, and then to Kull's, the more I understood exactly what had happened between Kull and his children. More importantly, through all my analysis, Kull became incredibly easy to find. He had not moved since the death of his daughter.

I focused my energy on instantaneous travel, I simple replaced my current location with that of Kull's only approximately 20 ft away from him in an area with no conflicting objects or

hazards. I did however input a modification to my own physical form to ensure Kull would not detect me, and it worked perfectly as I planned.

Before me sat a man, in a stone throne. Gray as you would expect, the handles of his throne cut sharply into rectangular shapes, the back raised far above his head and the legs blended into the ground without seams, almost as if the chair had grown into place like a tree.

Above me appeared a small glimmer of light that somehow illuminated the whole room. It was as if I was in a cave with a tiny skylight hundreds of feet above me. The room was surrounded with indentions in the gray stone walls, it was the basic code I first learned to modify basic elements in my life. Within seconds I identified the code as the different variations of Kull's daughter. The process he went through to create her.

The man in the chair before me, Kull, his skin was like glass, only the color of gray. I could see his eyes under his closed eyelids, one was blue, one was red. He had no beard, no hair on his head, but his face looked so tired and old.

If I had to compare Kull's appearance to that of a person on Earth, I would say he resembled someone who was 145 years old. He had wrinkles everywhere. Even under his dark blue, shiny garments I could see he was shriveled and hunched.

After analyzing the room and the man himself I decided I would make myself appear before him. As I lifted the vail around me, he slowly opened his eyes and lifted his head toward me.

The man's face began to shake gently, his blue eye filled with tears. Without a moment's hesitation the man began sobbing in his throne, throwing his face into his old withered hands.

I spoke aloud to the man "I'm sorry you are hurting ... Kull." The man whimpered and struggled as he spoke back "I ... couldn't do it. I'm sorry."

I could see his emotions like anyone sees color, the radiated out of him like ink polluting other colors as they're simultaneously submerged in water. I could also see, feel and hear his thoughts in code, my own emotions & my mind.

As Kull continued to cry I realized why God had wound up the way he did.

Kull created his daughter when he was midway through his life cycle. He created God toward the end of his life cycle. His daughter had become so lonely and creatures that were not her equal did not satisfy her intellectually or emotionally. As part of her code, she could not create her own as Kull knew such a creation would force her to shorten her own life.

Knowing his daughter wanted a brother of equal status so badly, Kull created God with his own life force, but Kull, having so little left, made mistakes, leaving him powerless to correct them and powerless to help his daughter if they ever were at odds.

Kull spoke with more composure than before, "I entered this world with gray eyes. Becoming a father provided me with feelings, thoughts & hopes I had never felt before. I knew I made a mistake with God, I know how this sounds, but even if I could change him, I don't think I would have. My only regret is that I could not die in the place of my daughter." The man continued to

cry for a moment in front of me, then struggled while continuing to speak "A father's love for his child, even I cannot change that. You give everything you have to your children, I just wish they didn't have to suffer because of my mistakes."

The more I observed Kull's words, his face and his code I could see how genuine and remorseful he was. I imagined using my power to bring his children before him only leaving the aspects of God's corrupt code behind, but I knew Kull would not be satisfied without his authentic, original children.

I spoke aloud to Kull "I've seen your code, and I know that you cannot see mine as a result of my own evolution. I know that you are incapable of bringing your children back. I know the pain you feel, I have seen much of your life play out before me through the many lines of code that make you who you are Kull." Kull replied somewhat agitated "We are more than code! My son & daughter were living breathing gods!" I stepped away from Kull and turned my back to him to look at the walls around us.

I spoke aloud to Kull "You only display your daughter's code on this wall." Kull replied "It was in memory of her. My last bit of strength left after the creation of my son." I ripped through the wall of the universe to search for code once more and found his daughter's code in the exact form it was just before she had died.

After modifying the universe to my will, I turned around to Kull and lifted my arm. As my arm raised, the walls around us transitioned to show God's code instead of Kull's fallen daughter's. Kull's eyes widened as he silently watched the world around him shift.

I spoke aloud "You won't need to remember your daughter anymore Kull. She's standing next to you." Kull's stare became weak, his head began to dip forward, and he collapsed in his chair. He could feel his daughter coming back to his reality, as she was, just how he remembered her.

This woman was beyond description, I had seen no one like her before. The moment she gained her consciousness again, she immediately went to aide her father.

Seeing them reunited, knowing their troubles were mostly behind them, I felt confident in the future they would influence without God to end what the world was, or his own sister once more.

It was time for me to go home.

CHAPTER 23

THE BLACK NIGHTMARES

I decided to travel home in a slower manner than usual. I had a lot of thoughts and feelings I needed to give my attention to. While I was traveling through space at thousands of miles per hour, I still had hours before I would arrive home.

I felt like crying after seeing Kull see his daughter for the first time in so long. It made me wish I had someone to return to myself. I felt dead to my mother and my other family seemed to have nothing but negative feelings toward me ever since the incident with my mother's eyes.

The only people left in the world who I knew loved me was The Body & Julia. Thinking of Julia, my pain from what I had just seen and felt turned to concern as the last time I saw Julia, I had given her the crushed Reaper.

I decided it was time to stop flying and get to where I was going. Ripping open the code interface I found myself next to Julia seconds later.

Julia was bathing when I arrived. Seeing her in a bathtub made me burst out laughing. Julia was not surprised to see me there, thanks to how I changed her code, she knew I was coming. She spoke aloud "I know Daniel, you could simply 'alter the code' to make yourself not get dirty or even clean yourself right away but not everyone has lost the simple things in life you know?" I smiled and replied "Sorry, I've had a rough day. It's nice to see something like this." She smiled back and replied, "I'm sorry for being so dis..." I cut her off mid-sentence with a kiss.

As I leaned in, kissing Julia, she grabbed me and pulled me into the tub as I screamed and laughed. With little thought my clothes were off and we were kissing much more heavily.

Hours passed, we found ourselves lying in bed, talking about numerous things that had changed in the world over the last few weeks. After a while the Reaper came up. Julia had placed it in a thick metal box by itself in the ground outside. After looking at the code in depth, I realized I had evolved to a point since The Body changed me that I could easily remove the Reaper from this world

without consequence. I finished him without a second thought.

I spoke aloud "Thank you for watching over that for me." she replied, "You just ... erase things, don't you?" I replied with a sigh, "If I don't remove certain things from this planet, people will get hurt." Julia looked away from my eyes and spoke "I know. But some people care about the people you erase Daniel." I went silent for a moment and then after thought I spoke again "I love you Julia. I'm sorry my actions have hurt you." Julia's eyes began to water again so she buried her face in a pillow.

After a while her emotions calmed, and we fell into sleep despite not needing to anymore.

I woke up the next day to the smell of breakfast. As I rubbed my eyes I could see a massive blur standing before me. My eyes focused and I realized it was The Body. He spoke "So I got fired." I exploded with laughter. I immediately dove into The Body's thoughts and saw that Kull's daughter had returned to Earth. I could see the changes she had made were extreme and elegant the moment I looked into the updated code.

I searched for code of prisons, military bases even cancer hospitals and they were all gone. Kull's daughter had done what I was afraid to do. She didn't acknowledge opinions or cultures, and simply rebuilt the world in the way she deemed fit.

The Body had informed me that he had already done half the things she was planning to do before she stepped in and corrected some of his shortcomings and took things a step further to more closely resemble her world pre-God.

The Body spoke to me "She has a message for you, I'm sure you already know it." and he was right. But knowing something and focusing on it are two different things, so I was glad he brought it to my attention. The daughter of Kull, the returned god of Earth, wanted me to know that I was forbidden from altering her world further. She also gave me the coordinates of the location of the alien who had sent his own kind out to torture me as a child.

I was slightly offended by the level of ego the new god of Earth flaunted but was also grateful I could finally find justice for every torture I had encountered as a child.

After a short goodbye to Julia, The Body and I found ourselves soaring through space to confront my childhood demons. As we approached their planet, I came to understand that the blackness of this world made the rest of empty space look like the sun. It was a level of darkness I cannot explain.

The Body and I floated in place far outside the atmosphere of this abnormal beyond black mass as we studied the code of the planet. Earth's new god had highlighted the code of the alien commander in red.

I wanted to just delete the code of the alien commander, but The Body introduced another option. He spoke "Julia said you are good at erasing things, and I am like you, deleting other beings as I see fit." I looked at The Body as he glanced at this terrifying alien home planet. The Body continued "Let's give this one a chance."

With the new god of Earth managing everything, I had time to dig deeper into this world. The Body verified that these aliens operated in basic code and were not threat to us as I formed a platform and habitat for the alien to exist in as

we spoke to it. While everything this commander did was clearly identifiable, the individual actions, communications and even thoughts of this alien were difficult to comprehend as most all the code reflected a culture and a language that was incredibly foreign to me.

The Body helped transition both of us into a state that was unreachable by this alien and upon finishing the quarters for the alien I placed him within it, standing before us.

The alien was behind a silver wall, we could see in, but all the alien could see inside was black. I designed the cage of sorts to take anything we said to the creature to translate for the alien. It worked both ways. Initially the alien just made screeching noises and tried to find a way out, so we repeatedly attempted to calm the alien. As we spoke, the alien stopped trying to find a way out and spoke directly up even though we were on each side of the cage.

My assumptions as a child were verified the more we listened to this creature talk. Much of the population of this planet was built on fear. They were so afraid of outside powers that that had

entire space programs to seek out and destroy sources of energy coming from creatures that were or could become more powerful than them.

The Body brought something to my attention "I see God had dealt with these creatures before. Looking at the code I see both him and you cross paths when you were just a baby." Pulling forward the information I verified what The Body had pointed out. God had arranged for these aliens to figure out a way to kill me before I could even talk.

The code revealed that God could crack the rock in my head but never destroy it entirely as it would always regenerate. God was using these creatures obsessed with fear to figure out how to eliminate the main threat to his own existence. He had convinced them I was destined to kill them, when he knew the one who was truly threatened, was him.

The Body exploded with another discovery following the very same code even further back "Daniel, your physical code starts at the date of your birth, but the stone in your head has a code that was created much further back, with your mother. Your original mother!" My eyes darted up

at The Body, I replied with less shock and optimism than The Body, "My mother is the new god of Earth."

The Body looked concerned and replied, "You say that like you knew." I replied, "I'm sorry, this is just a lot." A loud screech came from the cage once more. The creature was threatening us, despite how obvious it was that it was at a disadvantage.

I was frustrated and distracted at this point. The mother I was born of wanted nothing to do with me, and the mother who created me didn't bother to ever tell me who I was or ... anything outside where these aliens were.

While deep in thought I felt The Body wrap his arms around me. It was the first time I ever felt a giant hug me. I felt so powerless. The Body spoke "Hey.

cheer up ok?" Still upset I chuckled a little then patted The Body on the side to let him know he could stop squeezing me now.

I rubbed my eyes and began modifying the alien's code. As I worked on the alien The Body spoke up "Eeew! You thought your mom was hot?"

I stopped in the middle of coding "What? No. Not my birth mom and I didn't even know this lady was my original mom. I mean, she made a rock, not my body or anything." the body laughed explosively "You thought your mom was hot! Now that you know she's your mom you still think she's hot?" Glaring at the body I finished the alien's code.

I had erased all code revolving around my existence from this moment on. The alien was returned to their home and I additionally returned the code I had physically destroyed as a child. All the families and soldiers I killed, sending them back to their planet without the memory of what happened or the memory of my existence. Even the coordinates of our planet were erased from their navigation systems and records.

The Body observed me do this and spoke "Ok, for a guy who likes his mom, that was pretty kind of you to not just kill them all." I smirked and replied, "You know I only have eyes for Julia bud, and gross." The Body laughed saying "I know, I know." and after returning everything was in place on the dark planet we returned to our own.

Peace seemed to be wining, and I was so happy to be a part of that.

CHAPTER 24

MOTHER

It had been years since I had seen the god of Earth. The Body had altered his own code to be a more normal size human although he was still well over six feet tall. He mostly spent his time playing video games and racing vehicles in amateur circuits. Julia and I had been talking about having a baby and making our relationship more official and the world itself? It was hard to find a single thing wrong with it.

The economy was designed for the wellbeing of all. TV shows no longer reflected drama from our own planet but were most all based on what life was like on other planets, with other gods.

Even Kull himself was not the origin of all things. There were many more worlds, with many more creators as corrupt as and even more corrupt than our own former god.

I hadn't bothered to visit my family that brought me into my human form 20 years ago. I

felt like they were still better off without me. The same goes with my school friend David and even the house near the creek I grew up by.

That was all a past I didn't want in my future, and I was certain with our new god, they were all happy anyway.

Just like the new god of earth instructed me, I didn't physically alter the code of her planet or the people on it whatsoever. But I didn't need to, as my original mother was perfect, and no matter how much I evolved, she would still be wiser than me.